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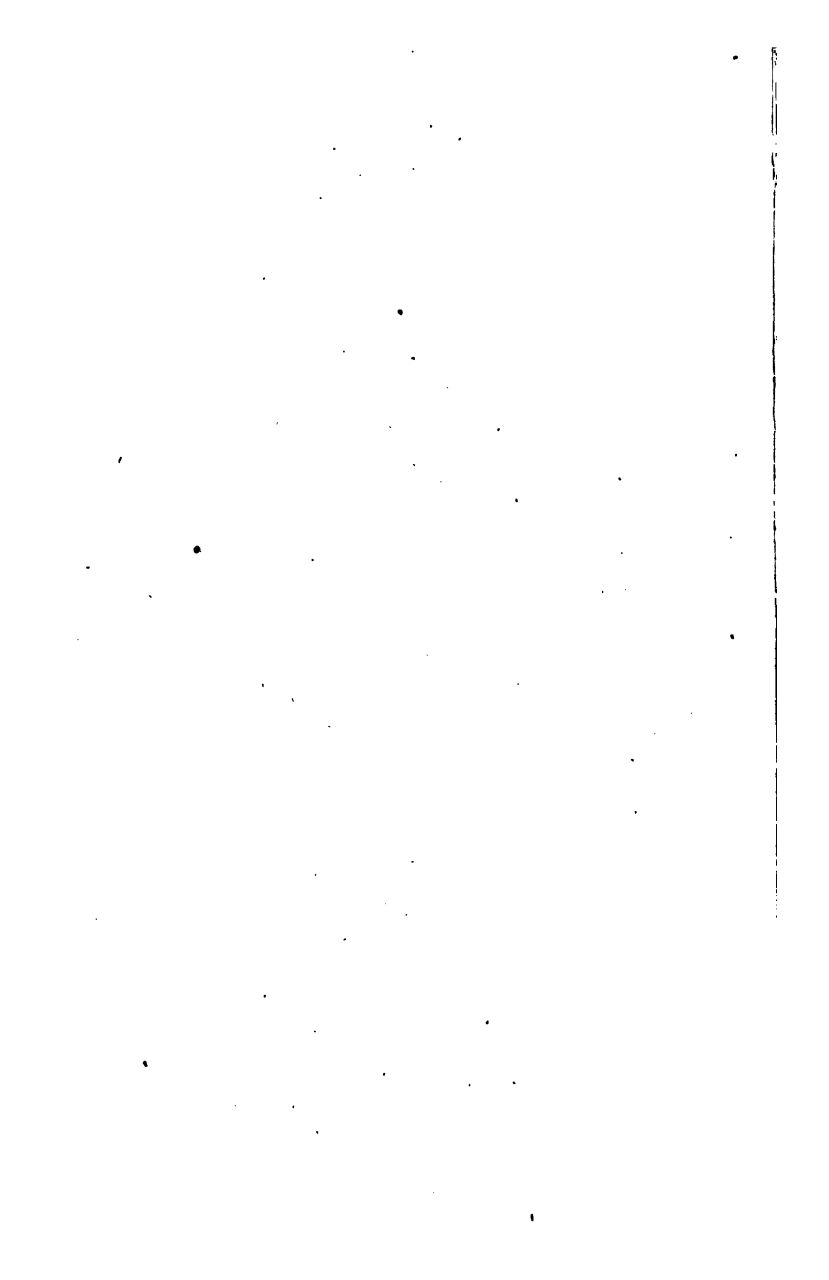
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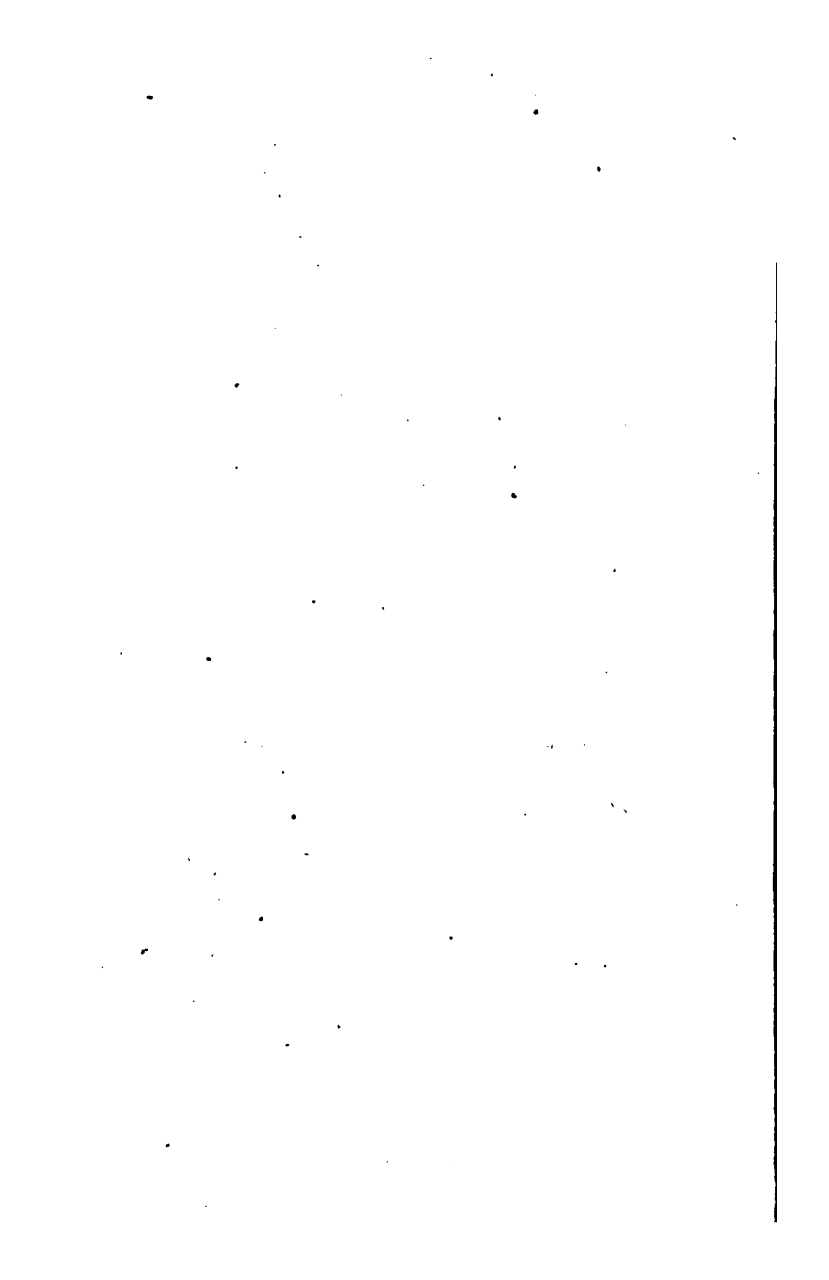
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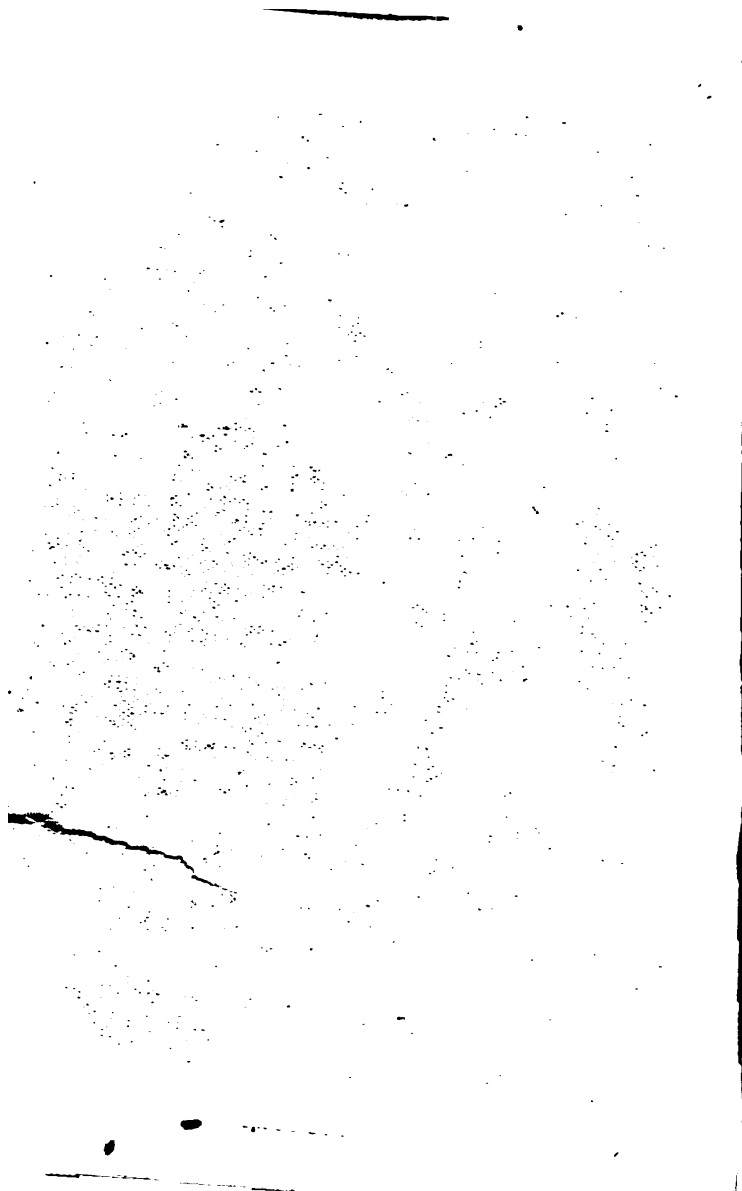








FRONTISPIECE.



Noonday:

A LIFE SKETCH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

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MOUNTAIN," "DRUNKARD'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

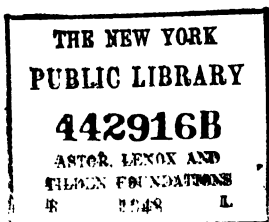


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BOSTON:
HENRY HOYT,
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1863.

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N O O N D A Y .

CHAPTER I.

THE BROTHERS .

“It was thy spirit, brother, which had made
The glad world joyous to my youthful eye,
While yet in childhood 'mid the vines we strayed,
Or sent glad singing through the clear blue sky.”

HAVING put on his slippers and dressing-gown, Dr. West sat down in the easy chair, without replying to his wife's questions about Mrs. Boyle's sick baby, or old Mr. Porter's rheumatism. He was evidently pondering some weighty subject, at least so thought his considerate partner, when she saw him turn over the pages of the last medical journal with the book

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bottom upward. His two eldest children, Frank and May, came from school ; the former to tell of an examination, by virtue of which he was admitted into a higher Latin class ; the latter in a state of equal delight on account of a poetical paraphrase for which she gained the prize in spite of a dozen rivals. For once the father heard the tale of trial and triumph without query or comment, and when May exhibited her prize, an ivory paper folder, with a carved handle, he put it into his pocket, as if it had been a vial of medicine.

“ Don’t trouble your father ; somebody must be very sick,” whispered the mother to her disappointed son and daughter. “ He never looks so, unless he has a burden on his mind.” With these words the loving wife resumed her needle, confident that in due time the mystery would be explained.

Half an hour thus passed, when Dr. West roused from his reverie.

“ I shall want you to put a couple of clean shirts and collars into the valise, Rebecca. I

am going to the city to-morrow, God willing." The last part of the sentence was characteristic, the good doctor being one of those who habitually recognize their dependence upon a Higher Power.

"I may not be home until Saturday. I don't intend to hurry away as soon as I get there."

"What has happened?" queried Mrs. West, with an air of anxiety.

"Nothing new, Rebecca," was gravely answered. "Nothing, except that brother Caleb has been much in my thoughts lately; and to-day when I rode by the brick school-house, where we went thirty years ago, the sight of the old building brought my boyhood back. Two lads with their arms around each other's neck, crossed the road to the pump opposite; don't think me foolish, Rebecca, when I tell you the sight made my eyes moist. Caleb and I used to walk in the same way, and now we have not seen each other for more than two years. It is not right for brothers to live so, and I will not another day."

“Caleb has lost his natural affection,” responded the wife. “He has not returned your last visit, nor did he answer your letter when you invited him to the centennial celebration of the town’s settlement. I suppose he thought he was too busy to come; but if you had lived on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, you would have had love enough for the place where you were born, and your father and mother buried, to be here then.”

“All these things make me more earnest to go,” was the answer. “We loved each other once with no common love, and grandfather called us David and Jonathan, because we were always together. We seldom had an apple or stick of candy without dividing it, or if one were obliged to stay after school for some boyish misdemeanor, the other waited outside.”

“Caleb has outlived all such feelings,” sighed Mrs. West. “People say that prosperity hardens a man’s heart. I am sure his must be like the old chopping block in the woodshed. The last time he was here he talked of nothing

but investments and securities, except when he wondered why you did not sell the old homestead, or at least, lay out a couple of house lots in the spot that used to be your mother's flower garden."

"He did not know how our hearts clung to the dear old place," replied the doctor. "It would be easier for me to have Frank give up his darling plan of a college course, than to let the house where my father and mother lived and died, go out of the family."

"All Caleb cares for is to make a good bargain," resumed Mrs. West. "I wonder how his wife can breathe in such an atmosphere of money-making, for I know my heart would pine and wither in the shadow of his selfish spirit."

"A business life in a great city must be a terrible tempta'tion," was the earnest response. "Thank God he has cast my lot in this quiet village, where my thoughts are continually drawn away from self, and my heart kept tender by daily contact with sickness, sorrow and

suffering. I must go to Caleb," he continued. "He had a warm heart once, and I believe the old love beats there still."

Two hours afterwards, Dr. West took his two youngest children on his knee, upon his return from a professional call. He could listen to their stories now, and as Maurice detailed a wonderful game of hide and seek between himself and Albert Haley, it would be difficult to tell whether speaker or hearer were most interested. May's paper folder was then drawn from her father's pocket, and all the minutiae of the poetical paraphrase rehearsed to her entire satisfaction. Simple household joys like these may seem to the stranger of small amount. They seem so to many parents, and because they do, the seeds of bitterness thereby planted in childish bosoms, spring up into a rank growth of filial neglect and disobedience in subsequent years.

"What will you do with your patients?" inquired Mrs. West, upon an allusion to the prospective journey of the morrow. "Susie

Miller may have a relapse of fever ; the Millers are always careless,—or Mrs. Boyle's baby another fit," and probably she would have enumerated half the sick in the village, had not her husband interposed.

" I am in the way of duty, Rebecca ; accordingly I must not trouble myself with possibilities. My heavenly Father will take care of me and mine in my absence."

" We must use means, notwithstanding," persisted the wife, who always sought a ladder on which her faith might climb, instead of soaring into the sky, upborne by the promises of the unchangeable God.

" I have done all I could," was the reply. " I called at Dr. Hooker's office just now, and asked him to look after my sick people. As he is judicious and considerate, I feel no anxiety."

" I might have known you would do that," returned the wife in a tone of vexation. " Most men frown upon a young rival, but since Dr. Hooker has been in the place, you have tried to help him. You lent him medical books,

sent him a ticket to the Lyceum, invited him to tea with Esquire Draper and the minister, and now you are introducing him into some of your best paying families."

"Remember the golden rule, Rebecca," was the mild answer. "I have done by Dr. Hooker as I would wish others to do by my Frank, should he ever be thrown among strangers, with a light purse and little sympathy. I was young once, and I consider it a privilege to encourage a young man of fine talents and high moral worth, like Dr. Hooker."

Mrs. West left the room to prepare the valise for the tour. Careful wife that she was, she could scarcely find shirts good enough for her husband, whom, notwithstanding her censures, she regarded as a model of manly excellence. While thus occupied with his wardrobe, her heart smote her for her narrow views, and she thought what a blessed place this world would be, were all its inhabitants governed by the great law of love.

CHAPTER II.

THE CITY MERCHANT.

“ There was a man, a wary man,
Whose bosom nursed full many a plan,
For making life’s contracted span,
A path of gain and gold,
And how to sow and how to reap,
And how to swell his glittering heap,
And how the wealth acquired, to keep
Secure within its fold,”

DR. WEST was not a man of vacillating purposes, consequently the morrow found him on his way to the city. Each moment of the journey was fraught with pleasure, as the longer one of life will be to the heart which beats for others rather than itself. He put down the car window when the breeze made an elderly lady cough, kept a troublesome child still by kind words and a few flowers, encouraged a pale invalid, who looked sadly in need

of sunshine, lent his newspaper to a returned sailor, who had not seen one for six months, and relinquished his seat to a timid girl with her hands full of packages. It was not surprising that his heart kept time to the songs of birds and the anthems of little brooks, or when the railroad terminus was reached at the end of the journey, he sprang from the cars with a step as elastic as a schoolboy's. After a momentary delay to see the elderly lady and young girl safely placed in a carriage, he pressed through the crowd of hackmen and porters towards his brother's place of business. Past the broad thoroughfares, past the shops of artisans and grocers, past the wharves crowded with shipping, in a gloomy street, frequented mostly by loaded drays, and men perhaps as much burdened, he at length paused before a warehouse that bore the familiar name on its massive front.

"Mr. West is in the counting room, but you cannot see him, as he gave particular orders not to be interrupted," replied a consequential

looking clerk, to the first inquiry. "You can call again, or leave your errand with me," he added, after a deliberate survey of the new comer's whole outer man.

"I think he will see me now," returned the doctor who had already approached the counting room door "No pressure of business can bar a brother's entrance."

The merchant sat before his desk, occupied with a large ledger, the leaves of which he turned over with an air of impatience and perplexity. Around him was scattered an uncounted multitude of papers, over which his eye wandered in apparent search of something that could not be found. A tall young man, with sharp, bony figure, hair brushed to the very extreme of stiffness, and collar so upright that he could scarcely turn his head, was aiding the investigation. Notwithstanding his uncouth appearance, he untied files, tossed over packages, transferred papers from one parcel to another, with despatch truly astonishing. The aspect of the warehouse was forbidding

and prison-like, that of the merchant's sanctum was doubly so, with its single window through which high brick walls and a gloomy yard, piled up with boxes and boards, alone were visible. As the doctor thought of his own study, with its vine-wreathed casement, framing in glimpses of green fields, pleasant gardens and far-off mountains, it seemed quite natural that the surroundings of the counting room should tend to render its inmate narrow-minded and circumscribed.

"Brother, brother Caleb," he began, at the same time placing his hand on the other's shoulder. The remainder of the sentence was prevented utterance by a strange choking in his throat.

"Edward, this is unexpected," returned the merchant, half rising, though with his eyes only partly withdrawn from the ledger. "What brings you here? a meeting of the Medical Society, or some wonderful surgical operation?"

"Neither," was the response, "but years

ago I had a brother, and I came to seek him out lest I lose him altogether."

"You are welcome, brother Edward," and the hard lines around the merchant's mouth relaxed into a partial smile. "I believe I shall lose myself," he resumed ; "this kind of life is enough to drive a man out of his senses. It is worse than ever just now, thanks to my old book-keeper, who left me two days ago, in a huff, because I refused to raise his salary. I took him when he was a boy, and led him on till he became my right hand man, but he forgot all that as soon as he found a chance for more money somewhere else. That is the way of the world ; there is no such thing as gratitude."

"I think you are mistaken, brother. The man who nourished a viper might think so, but we must not judge men by serpents."

"You are as simple as when you were a boy," rejoined Mr. Caleb West. "I recollect you used to share your cakes and apples with half a dozen thankless lads, and then help the

same lazy fellows do their sums, or get out their Latin lesson."

"How are your wife and children?" inquired Dr. West, with the desire to change the topic.

"Well, I suppose," answered the other indifferently, "though I have been too busy lately to ask questions about their health."

"Your eldest son, Felix, who had such a fancy for drawing when he spent the summer with me, three years ago, does he use the pencil as much as he did then?"

"I don't know about the drawing. The boy is in the high school, and keeps along with his classes, I believe. At any rate, I have paid a good round sum for books. I can't trouble myself to take note of his progress."

During the silence that ensued, Dr. West had leisure to scrutinize his brother's physiognomy. In boyhood, Caleb possessed attractive features, lighted by an eye that beamed with expression, and softened by a lip redolent in smiles. Heavy brows, furrowed too deeply

for his years, eyes which had an icy glitter in their brightness, a firmly compressed mouth, from which long lines crept across cheek and chin, now rendered the merchant's face an index of his character. He looked like what he was, a hard, cold man, with few thoughts beyond his business, and no God, save his gold. In apparent forgetfulness of his brother, he bent with feverish earnestness over his papers, only pausing long enough to ask his assistant a hurried question about bills and accounts. "Kimball, foot up these items," "Kimball, copy off this account," "Kimball, is Sedgwick's bill among that file of papers?" Such were the ejaculations that broke the stillness. Kimball's long, wiry fingers seemed made on purpose to grasp the pen, and figures poured out from their tips with despatch that would frighten a school-boy."

Half an hour passed thus, when the door again opened to admit a visitor. The latter was a gentleman in the prime of manhood, with a quiet dignity of manner which was a passport to respect.

"I will detain you only a moment, Mr. West," he began. "I called to solicit your mite for Downer, our old drayman, who, you recollect, broke his leg, and was otherwise injured, six weeks ago. The poor fellow has a large family dependent upon him, and I thought if a few of us whom he has served well, were to make him up a purse, it might keep the wolf from his door till he is able to be out again."

"Let him apply to the city, or seek help from the thousand and one charitable associations that drain away people's money, rather than claim favors from those who have always paid him well," was the cold response.

"He asked for nothing," rejoined the gentleman. "I accidently discovered his need. One of your ships has just arrived with a cargo from Baltimore. A barrel of flour would be a great help to a man flat on his back with six or eight mouths to feed."

"I am afraid my Baltimore cargo will not amount to much," said the merchant; "besides Mr. Howard, you know my theory about such

matters. Downer ought to have laid up a trifle for a rainy day. Let every one take care of himself; that's my motto."

"I would not wish to live in a world where such principles are carried out, neither, I think, would you," returned Mr. Howard, smiling. "I believe our Creator instituted the conditions of mutual dependence among the various members of the human family from a benevolent regard to the universal happiness."

"I have nothing for Downer," interrupted Mr. West. "When he can manage the dray I will employ him to do my carting, and pay him every Saturday night."

Notwithstanding this rebuff, the application did not prove a total failure. During the conference, Kimball, the accountant, turned to the window, where he pretended to be busy with a column of figures. It was only a feint, however, to conceal a worn brown wallet, from which he silently transferred a bank note into Mr. Howard's hand.

"You had better keep your money, Kim-

ball," said Mr. West, whose keen eye noted the act. "You may need it yourself."

"I always calculate to have a trifle ready to give away," said Kimball, looking very red. "I was brought up so," he added, "and I can afford it, because I don't smoke or chew; besides, somehow, my heart feels lighter afterwards."

This slight episode over, Mr. West became absorbed in the examination of figures condensed from papers of the returned ship. During the process, his excitement was shown by his hurried breathing, moist forehead, and sharp, quick tones. When at last, the venture was proved to be a decided success, he uttered an exclamation of relief, like one who lays down a heavy burden.

"That vessel has cost me several sleepless nights," he remarked. "I have not confidence in the Captain or the consignees to whom I sent the cargo. Either of them would cheat if he could."

"Why do you deal with men of doubtful

integrity?" queried the unsophisticated doctor.

"Because they are smart, and shrewd, and do my work well, provided I keep my eyes open. Captain Plympton is a regular Yankee, who looks to the main chance, and understands how to make a penny as well as any man I ever saw."

While the brothers were walking toward the house of the merchant, at the dinner hour, they encountered Mr. Howard. "I wish you could have seen Downer when we carried him the money that was collected, Mr. West," he began; "Though the poor man could not utter a word, his looks did me more good than the entire profits of a cargo like yours."

"Mr. Howard is a strange man," observed Caleb West, after the subject of his remarks had passed. "He always has a chimerical project on hand; to help a poor widow, educate an orphan child; find a place for a friendless lad, or something of that sort. Last winter I used to meet him in alleys and bye-places with

bundles of flannel for rheumatic old men, or primers and story books for children. He has gathered a company of ragged, dirty urchins into a Sabbath school, after making a bargain that they should all come with clean hands and faces. His time and labor are thrown away. Such boys are sure to turn out worthless vagabonds, do what you will."

"Most of them, I grant," replied the doctor; "still, if one in ten is raised to a useful manhood, the effort is not lost."

"I have no time for it, if I knew it would save the whole," returned the merchant. "Mr. Howard may run after them, but he don't enlist me."

"What is Mr. Howard?" inquired the doctor. "His manners are pleasing."

"A merchant, next door to me," replied Mr. West, "whose judgment and foresight would place him in advance of all his competitors, were it not for the peculiar notions he carries into trade. People who are righteous overmuch can't expect to prosper. Praying and exhort-

ing to good works, though very proper in their place, are sadly out of their sphere in a merchant who has to contend with all kinds of chicanery and dishonesty. A man who means to get rich must take advantage of other people's mistakes, and look out to keep his own head above water, whether his neighbors sink or swim."

"The Bible doctrine in which you and I were reared is different from that, brother," the doctor said gently.

"The Bible," repeated the merchant, while a sudden spasm contracted his brow, "the Bible was as familiar to my good mother as my ledger is to me. It was easy for her to follow its precepts, in her sweeping, sewing, bringing up her children, and doing good turns to the neighbors. So it is for you, whose gravest thought is the beat of a sick man's pulse or the color of his tongue. For me, who am so tired and hurried, that I have scarcely time to eat or sleep, the Bible would be an unprofitable counsellor. Don't judge me too hastily, Edward,"

he continued. "I reverence the book, and mean to shape my conduct by it some time. I don't intend to be always driven as I am now, and, when my day of leisure comes, I shall be as religious and charitable as you and Mr. Howard."

CHAPTER III.

WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

"It is not much the world can give,
With all its subtle art,
And gold and gems are not the things
That satisfy the heart;
But, oh! if those who cluster round
The altar and the hearth,
Have gentle words and loving smiles,
How beautiful is earth!"

CALEB WEST ushered his brother into his handsome mansion with feelings of gratified pride. Edward did not often see such furniture and carpets, or sit at a table spread and attended like that where he was now a guest. Perhaps to deepen this impression of his wealth, Mr. West, while at dinner, related the story of his successful enterprises, during the two last years. Vessels sent to different ports,

had returned with cargoes that were speedily transmuted into gold, a railroad in which he was a large stockholder had rapidly risen in public favor, and some city lots, at one time doubtful property, had been sold for twice their original cost. These statements were corroborated by abundant tokens of wealth. From more cumbrous articles of rosewood and marble, to lesser details of the dinner table, everything bore witness of the power of riches to gratify the material wants of human nature. Are there other wants which cannot thus be appeased? A single look at the faces around that luxurious board might have been an affirmative answer. Mrs. West, formerly a belle and beauty, now with a haggard face, from which smiles as well as roses had faded, took little interest in the conversation. Felix, a youth with dark eyes and hair, who would have been handsome were it not for his sullen scowl, bent over his plate, wholly intent upon the selfish gratification of eating.

“You do not look well, sister Catharine,”

said Dr. West, when his brother finished the tale of his late profits on coffee and sugar.

"I am tired," she answered wearily. "The children have had the measles, and my broken sleep has not done me much good."

"It is all her own fault," rejoined her husband, impatiently. "I believe women like to make out that they are martyrs. She has a nursery girl, and she can have two more if she chooses; so what is there to keep her from sleeping?"

"Men don't know how a mother feels," retorted the wife. "I can't sleep when I hear little Ella call for me, or when I know she is tossing about with her mouth parched and forehead burning."

"Children ought not to be humored in all their whims; that is the way to spoil them," resumed the father. "Mr. Howard skated with his boys last winter, and I have known him to walk out into the country with a hammer, and spend a whole afternoon in knocking off bits of rock, just because the youngsters had

a fancy for collecting minerals. I call that rather small business for a full grown man."

"Not so very small if we consider it in its relation to the future," observed the doctor.

"I have often thought one great reason why you and I did better in Latin and Greek than some of our school-mates, was because we read over our lessons to mother every evening. Though she did not understand a word of either language, her interest in our progress stimulated our efforts to excel."

"I wish my father would care about things I like," said Felix, who, for the first time, listened to the conversation.

"Silence," commanded the parental voice.

"If your father were foolish enough to spend his time like Mr. Howard, you might be obliged to turn boot-black or errand boy for the sake of earning your bread."

The merchant's parlors were furnished with magnificence that nearly dazzled the unaccustomed eyes of Dr. West, upon his withdrawal from the dining-room. Rich colors and pleas-

ing forms were so blended into a harmonious whole, that no single object was at first recognizable, amid the group. By degrees, however, the roses of the carpet, the elaborate carving of the furniture, the heavy draperies of windows, and the exquisite beauty of statuettes and candelabras revealed their distinctive features. One thing alone seemed incongruous, in the splendid apartment. On a marble table, under a chandelier, whose pendant brilliants reflected the varied colors of the rainbow, stood a plain glass dish filled with white violets. Rare exotics, almost oppressive with their burden of fragrance, in tall, antique vases, quite overshadowed the little woodland guests. Dr. West might have lingered by the wild flowers till he discovered the secret of their strange companionship, had not his attention been diverted by a painting on the opposite wall. The scene, one of the quiet valleys that nestle amid Alpine hills, was so faithfully delineated by the artist, that a real landscape, into which the spirit of repose was transfused, apparently

rose from the canvas. Glassy waters, peaceful as the sleep of infancy ; rural homes in the shade of giant trees ; a quaint old church, with sun-light gilding its walls ; a picturesque bridge, green with vines and mosses, and near it a sunny slope, where stood an aged man and a child, one with his eyes fixed on the summer heaven, the other caressing a snowy lamb, together formed a combination on which was no outward trace of the serpent's trail.

Such pictures have a soothing influence over the mind. As Dr. West looked he became more and more absorbed in delight, until a harsh voice which issued from the dining-room, suddenly roused him from his reverie. Sad that the peace should be in fancy, and the discord in real life ! The tones increased in vehemence, answered by other tones less excited, though equally bitter, until the voices of husband and wife, in angry contention, were distinctly audible. Mutual taunts and reproaches followed, accusations and recriminations were flung from one to the other, as children fling

dead leaves. Soon a hurried opening and shutting of doors, with a harsh exclamation, which was a climax of the whole matter, were succeeded by the steps of Mr. West in the hall.

“There is no such thing as peace or comfort,” he ejaculated, with a scornful glance at the picture. “I have toiled for both, worse than any galley slave, for the last twenty-five years, and to-day they seem farther off than ever. Yesterday I had a note from Felix’s teacher, to inquire why the boy was absent from school half the time, and to-day a bill of ten dollars was sent in from a low refreshment saloon. I don’t mind the money, but I don’t want my child to frequent a place little better than a tippling-shop. His mother is partly in fault, and I told her so. She ought to have known where he was, before things came to this pass.”

With these words the father hurried into the street, ready to forget the danger of his child in the cares of the counting-room. Dr. West spent the next hours in a cozy back parlor,

which was the embodiment of domestic elegance. Adorned by creations of the needle and pencil, fragrant with plants that flourished in deep bay windows, and made tuneful by birds that sung in gilded cages, the whole room was one beautiful picture, with no unfilled void either for taste or imagination. The hostess, whose jaded features were partially concealed by a tasteful head-dress, reclined upon a velvet lounge, in the luxury of indolent ease. Ella, the youngest child, brought from the nursery to see her uncle, busied herself in decorating the head and neck of a pet lap-dog with a profusion of gay ribbons. The other member of the group, Lucia, in a brown dress, which matched the color of her hair, sat by the piano, wholly intent on a new piece of music.

“I have been thinking about your first visit after our marriage, Edward,” said Mrs. West. “We lived in a small house on Fair street, furnished in a very plain way. All the silver we had, was an old-fashioned tea-pot, and a dozen spoons that were mother’s, still I felt like singing all the time.”

“Can’t you sing now, sister Catharine? few women have a home like this.”

“Yes;” the answer came with a sigh. “There are pictures and vases, bronze and marble, damask and velvet, but they look worthless, when I think of their cost.”

“Surely my brother Caleb is an honorable man,” was the quick reply.

“I believe it,” answered the wife. “I would not wear this ring,” and she raised her finger bright with a diamond circlet, “if I thought a single gem were the price of dishonesty.”

“What then?” and the speaker’s tones were anxious.

“Did you ever hear of hearts dull to everything but the love of gold?”

“Perhaps you are mistaken. Regard for his family may lead Caleb thus to seek wealth,” rejoined the doctor.

“No, it is the love of money for its own sake. Poor Felix,” and the mother’s tears fell upon her embroidered handkerchief.

“What has Felix done?”

“Grown weary of home, lost his interest in study, strayed into bad company, and half broken his mother’s heart. It need not have been so,” she continued bitterly, “if his father cared half as much for his child as for the outfit of a vessel. Mr. Howard has done more for his sons, by his walks with them, after minerals and butterflies, than by paying money for books and teachers.”

“Tell my brother so, and he will see that a father ought to take an interest in his family.”

“No,” replied Mrs. West; “some men think all they have to do is to pay the bills of their household. When I was sick in the winter he brought a nurse and doctor, and kept my table full of fruits and jellies, but he never spent an hour in my chamber, or spoke the words of tenderness for which a woman’s heart yearns.”

Here the speaker was interrupted by a summons to the front parlor, where two ladies were awaiting her presence. Throughout their stay

she conversed with grace and vivacity, occasionally giving emphasis to her remarks by a silvery laugh, which was the apparent expression of a spirit unvisited by care. "You have everything that heart can wish, while I am half dying for a set of curtains like these, Mrs. West," exclaimed one of the guests. "The possession of such a sweet thing would make me perfectly happy," chimed in the other, placing her hand on a flower-girl of white marble, that stood in a recess. After the ladies withdrew, they descanted at length upon the superb appointments of the mansion, and envied its happy possessor. So imperfectly does the world judge the heart!

During the call, little Ella, who, with childish caprice, had become weary of her canine play-fellow, rested her curly head upon her uncle's knee. A few kind words led her to trust herself in his arms, where she soon forgot her fears and weariness in sleep. The doctor marked the birdlike flutter of her breath, and the delicate tracery of her blue-veined temples

with a secret foreboding that the Good Shepherd would soon call this tender lamb to his fold above.

A geometry on the table with the name of Felix on its brown paper cover, now drew Dr. West's thoughts to another of his relatives. School-books often are an index to the character of their owner ; accordingly he opened this in hope to find some clue to a nature apparently sullen and reserved. Instead of the quotations and scribblings common to blank pages, there were a few figures of birds and animals, with a large number of human heads. Though hastily drawn, they all bore the marks of spirit, each sketch having a distinctive character, which showed it the result of a pre-conceived plan. On a half sheet of paper slipped between the problems, was the figure of a man counting money at a desk. That more time had been spent on this drawing, was proved by the careful delineation of features, from the heavy brow that arched over deep set eyes, to the hard, close mouth and sharp chin. Seve-

ral other forms were grouped around the prominent character: a cripple with a staff, a child in the garb of poverty, another child with his hand on the money counter's sleeve, and a woman in an imploring attitude. The man, intent upon his gold, bent over his desk without a motion of his head. Dr. West looked at this picture with a strong suspicion that it had some deeper meaning than a mere fancy sketch.

Later in the day, Dr. West invited Felix to join him in a walk. The invitation was received with a scowl, and though the youth did actually desert his companion at the first corner, he kept so far in advance that there was little opportunity for conversation. Even this he attempted to thwart by answering mostly in monosyllables, or pretending not to hear. A man less hopeful than Dr. West would have given up in despair, when Felix assured him that he hated school, loathed books, thought teachers a nuisance, and mathematics a worse torture than the inquisition. Not so with the uncle, who knew that God did not intend all

his children for linguists or mathematicians, to the exclusion of other wants and tastes.

"You must stop here, Felix," Dr. West said abruptly, when they reached a shop where a large variety of engravings were displayed at the window. "I must feast my eyes on these pictures."

For the first time during the walk, Felix asked a question. "Do you think such things worth looking at, uncle?"

"Would I think the Alps or Lake Como worth looking at? Do I think the Pyramids and Sphinx almost worth a voyage across the Atlantic?" was the enthusiastic rejoinder.

"I might have known you were not like father," responded the boy. "He would rather see a good bank-note than all the fine views in the world."

"I have not outgrown my boyish fancy for pictures," returned the uncle. "Once when I had twenty-five cents to buy a knife, I heard that a painting of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden had just been opened for exhibition.

I went to see the picture, though, in consequence I was obliged to do without a knife for the next six months. I believe I should act in the same way now."

Felix now followed his uncle into the shop, and assisted him to select an engraving for his cousin May. "Did May send for a picture?" he inquired.

"No, but I want to make her a present, and she would prefer this to a new dress; besides you helped choose it."

Felix's eye brightened. "What shall you buy for Frank? Does he like pictures, too?"

"Not as well as May. His tastes are for things that require thought; so I believe he must have a box of chess."

As the two turned into the next street to make this purchase, a low, significant whistle, repeated at regular intervals, sounded from the adjacent court. Shortly after, a rough, ill-dressed lad, who emerged from a narrow passage, between two buildings, began to address Felix in the language common to juveniles of

the lowest class. "Rare fun," "straight off," "old cove," and "a dime a head," were the phrases that most forcibly convinced Dr. West that his nephew was in danger, but the latter shook off the intruder with a look that made him shrink away like a whipped cur. The walk was continued, the chess were bought, and Felix became more communicative with each street he traversed.

"I hate the name of business. I wish there was no such thing as money," he exclaimed, when reference was made to his father's cares.

"I have seen a great many times when I longed for wealth; when I wished that God had given me more of the golden good," was the reply.

Felix's lip curled; his uncle had sunk in his estimation.

"Last week," was resumed, "I saw a sick mother with four little children, who, I knew, had not food enough in the house, to make a dinner for a kitten. Yesterday, I met a poor boy on his way to school, who had taken off

his shoes, lest he should wear them out, in a walk of four miles over a hilly road. This morning, I passed a girl, as large as your sister Lucia, picking cowslips in the meadow, which she told me were to help buy a Bible for Sabbath school. When I see such things, I long for money."

"It is a good thing to be rich," said Felix, soberly, "but it is a trial too."

We have heard of spells that made proud hearts gentle, and dark homes bright, and we always thought kindness, was the secret spell that wrought such wonders. Certainly, gas burners or candelabra, with their light reflected from burnished mirrors or heavily gilded picture frames, did not give Mr. West's back parlor the cheerful look it wore that evening. The younger children were in good humor, so was Mrs. West, who laughed in a manner so unlike herself, that her husband looked up from his newspaper to learn the cause. The only thing he observed was his brother, with Ella on his knee, and the others around him,

whom he was amusing by the recital of some adventure connected with his early days. An hour afterward, the merchant looked up again, at a joyful hurrah from Felix, who had checkmated his uncle's king.

"Playing chess, Edward?" was the surprised exclamation. "I believe you are as much of a boy, as you were twenty-five years ago."

"I believe I am in some respects," was the laughing answer. "When Felix and I passed a play-ground, where a party of lads were having a game of cricket, I thought I would like to take my time at bowling."

The merchant sighed. "Your experience of life has been unlike mine. My cares and anxieties, crush out every particle of youthful feeling, and leave me a mere breathing account book."

"Is it wise, thus to cumber yourself, Caleb?" and the speaker laid his hand familiarly upon the other's hollow cheek. "I honor

business men," he continued with enthusiasm. "I reverence the enterprise that builds railways, rears manufactories, freights ships, and propels machinery, yet do not those who control these grand undertakings, sometimes sacrifice themselves on the altar of Mammon? You, Caleb?"

"I have not read a book for two years or more, have not visited a friend for the same length of time, don't recollect my age or the date of my marriage, met one of my little girls in the street the other day without knowing her, till she called me father."

"You are too much taxed," was the sympathetic rejoinder. "Give up a portion of your traffic; sell out your share in half your ships; reduce your manufacturing stock; and curtail your operations in real estate. In this way, you will gain leisure for your family; for the great questions that agitate humanity; for acts of public improvement and private charity; and, above all, for your Maker and your own soul."

"You don't understand my affairs," the merchant impatiently replied. "They are so complicated and twisted up with other people, that I always have a fit of headache, when I attempt to find out where I stand. The sums which daily pass through my hands, to you would seem almost fabulous ; still, if I were to estimate my property, I might not come anywhere near the mark."

"I suppose you think me a terrible heathen," he resumed after a pause, "but when a man gets into such a whirl, he don't have much chance to take care of his soul. You must pray for me, Edward ; I recollect you did in a heavy thunder shower when we were boys, and I felt safer afterwards."

Business men ought to have a large share in the petition of God's children. Exposed to peculiar trials and temptations, such as their brethren who till the soil, or explore the field of thought can never know, they need the restraining influence of Christian principles in the daily pursuits of life. There is danger that

they forget the claims of others, in their desire for individual gain ; and, more danger still, that they lose sight of the heavenly treasure, in the struggle for uncertain riches.

CHAPTER IV.

MORE ABOUT THE MERCHANT.

“ For me the sordid cares in which I dwell,
Shrink and consume the heart, as heat the scroll.”

ON the morning, Felix brought his uncle a portfolio of drawings, and afterwards invited him into his own room to exhibit an oil painting he had copied, from one in the hall. All these were creditable to the youthful artist, who particularly excelled in the life-like character of his sketches. His waves curled like real waves, and his boughs seemed bending in the breeze, with the sunlight stealing in among their leaves. After a pleasant talk about pictures, which extended to the various details of light and shade, gnarled trunks and gray old ruins, broad parks and sunset on the waters, the uncle and nephew left the house together,

one on his way to the warehouse, the other with his satchel for the school-room.

Before they reached the second corner, the rough looking boy whom they encountered the previous evening, again pulled Felix by the sleeve. "A sail in the harbor," he whispered, "White and Ranlet are going;" and in evident expectation that the hint would be taken, he disappeared into a court. Felix went steadily on, however, too much interested in his uncle's description of Frank's animals and insects, to heed the admonitory whistle that followed him through the street.

"You know how a boy feels, uncle," Felix exclaimed at parting. "Father says nothing but humph! when I tell him anything."

These words recurred to the doctor, while he walked on alone. Think you not, gentle reader, that the number of youthful transgressors would be less, if parents, in remembrance of their own early days, were more ready to sympathize with their children? The young need to confide their frailties and temptations,

as well as their hopes and purposes, and he who can whisper his weakness to the parental ear, gains an element of strength for the struggle.

The merchant was at his desk in nearly the same posture as on the previous day, with a large sheet of paper before him, on which he traced lines and dots with nervous rapidity. At another desk stood Kimball, writing letters according to his superior's dictation, while a young man who had an office of trust in the establishment, waited at the door to receive orders concerning the storage of goods. Kimball asked a question relative to a doubtful point in his letter, the young man another as to the disposal of a second lot, and Captain Plympton came in to talk over his Baltimore voyage. Mr. West answered both queries in a breath, entrusted a third clerk with an errand to a neighboring firm, discussed the probabilities of another expedition with the Captain, and dashed heavy lines on the paper with redoubled earnestness,

In the midst of this hurry a lady dressed in black, accompanied by a pale, slender lad, was admitted into the counting room. Timidly advancing towards Mr. West, the stranger introduced herself by an allusion to a letter addressed to him the previous month, to which she had received no answer. "I must find employment for Arthur, and there is no other person in the city to whom I can apply," she said in conclusion.

"I remember, now," replied Mr. West; "you are the wife of William Temple, my old schoolmate, and you wrote about a place for your boy."

The lady bowed, and, like a true woman, choked down her tears.

"Is the boy willing to work? Does he step about quick, and can he add a column of figures?" The questions were asked in a cold, business tone.

"I will work night and day to help my mother," returned the lad with flashing eyes. "I can write and cipher too," he added proudly. "You may try me."

“You had better try a taste of salt water,” interrupted Captain Plympton. “The sea air will fill out your canvas, and by the time you’ve knocked about with me six months, your own mother would never know you. I have been coasting about for a likely young chap like you to take on my next voyage.”

The speaker had a pipe in his mouth, and garnished his remarks with an oath.

With a simple negative to the proposal, the lady turned again to Mr. West. “I am not in actual need of such a boy,” he replied, “though I might employ him to do errands and save the time of other people. Sometimes, when we are hurried, it might be convenient to have him copy an account, or run over a column of figures.”

Further inquiries, which revealed more clearly the lad’s capacities, induced the merchant to take him into his service; still, when reference was made to compensation, the sum mentioned was so small, that even the skinking mother dared ask for more.”

“Very well,” was the indifferent rejoinder. “Boys are as plenty as black berries in August, and you can’t expect me to take one who is no more fit for my use than a wild colt, and pay him for the privilege of breaking him into service.”

“I’ll give him a birth with me, and he may get to be skipper yet,” urged Captain Plympton, who had taken a fancy to the lad. “Come, my hearty, what do you say about a trip to Baltimore or the West Indies, may-be? Boys like to see strange things.”

The mother again declined and rose to go, when, induced perhaps by the thought of her dependence, after a touching allusion to her straitened circumstances, she acceded to the terms first offered. When she reached the door in her departure, her timidity suddenly vanished. “You will deal honorably and truly with my son,” she exclaimed, with a spirit which might have become a Spartan matron. “He will have none but you to watch over him in the hour of danger, and as you are to a

poor fatherless boy, so may the Great Father above be to you and yours!"

The cheek of the merchant blanched, for a prophetic feeling admonished him that what the loving mother meant as a blessing, might hereafter become a malediction.

"I am glad I don't have that sail to carry," sneered the Captain. "Boys brought up by such women are too qualmish for me. They always see breakers ahead when you want them to steer against their peculiar notions."

"I wish I had not agreed to take him," responded Mr. West. "His mother expects me to keep a spiritual watch over him, just as if that was my business."

"Brother," interposed the doctor, "have you forgotten how William Temple befriended us when the tall young men at Grantham Academy threatened to make us ride on the rail, and play off other school boy tricks on new comers? Afterwards he brought us pears and grapes from his father's garden, and spoke words of cheer when a hard lesson was to be

learned or a composition written. We can pay back part of the debt by kindness to his fatherless boy."

"It is well I don't see you very often, Edward," said Caleb West, with a forced smile. "You would make me give up business, and turn into a street preacher or city missionary."

"No," was the response, "a Mercantile man can labor as truly to advance the good time coming, as a preacher of righteousness. Nay, at times I think he can do more, inasmuch as his influence extends into the familiar details of daily life."

"Too much religion don't pay," suggested Captain Plympton. "These high notions of truth and honesty cost too much for common use."

"William Temple sacrificed himself to mistaken views of duty," observed the merchant. "First in his class, both in school and college, he might have made a mark in the world, and gained honor and money. But he chose to bury himself in the West, among a people who

could scarcely give him bread to keep his family from starving. Three months ago he died, leaving his wife, who is worthy of a better fate, with an empty purse and half a dozen children, of whom this boy is the eldest. He would have come out better if he had not been quite so conscientious."

Dr. West thought of the crown of glory prepared for every faithful servant of the Lord, compared with which all earthly honors and treasures are as the small dust of the balance, but he knew this consideration would have no weight with his worldly-wise brother. Therefore he contented himself with a remark that would be better understood. "Some provision will be made for the family. God's promises are to his children and their seed after them."

"I would rather have some good bank stock. That will sell in the market, and buy food and clothes, which these Bible texts never do. I will take the boy," he continued. "He can earn enough to pay his board, and that will be one burden less for his mother. I suppose she

will open a boarding house, like a thousand other poor women, and struggle on till her little strength is gone, and then waste away in consumption."

At this juncture a man with a dejected face, and a crape band on his hat, entered the counting-room, and approached Mr. West. "A little accommodation, if you please," he begged; "I am in a tight place now, but in the course of a week I hope to find money easier."

"I want my dues," replied the merchant, with a look stern enough to frighten a timid man.

"Mr. West," the tone was beseeching in its earnestness; "wait one week till my dividends come in, but if you press me now, I dare not think of the result."

"I never wait, Mr. Floyd. You have had time to get ready for to-day in the three months since the note was given. I always know when my payments become due, and prepare myself accordingly."

"You are a rich man, Mr. West, and if disappointed in one place, have only to reach out

your hand another way. It is different with me. I have had losses, besides, yesterday I followed my only daughter to the grave. I had no heart to attend to business as usual the last days of her life. Surely all this will excuse my want of promptness."

"Nothing but a man's own death can excuse his failure to pay a written promise within a specified time."

Mr. Floyd retired without another word, then reappeared in a few minutes and cancelled the obligation.

"I knew the old fellow could pay if he chose, though I suppose he is rather hard pressed," said Mr. West, apologetically after the second departure. "Perhaps you think me hard-hearted, Edward, but it don't do to let sympathy run away with judgment. When I began business, I used to be imposed upon by all sorts of stories trumped up for the occasion, but now I have the same answer for all."

A letter that now arrived from a manufacturing firm with which the merchant dealt, chang-

ed the current of thought. Evidently the subject required immediate attention, as, with a hasty glance over the sheet, he dipped his pen in the inkstand preparatory to a reply. He paused, however, balanced his forehead on his thumb in silent thought, and then invited his brother to ride with him to Cheshire, a suburban town a few miles distant, where the firm had extensive iron foundries.

“You recollect Taggart,” he continued, “who was in our class at the Academy. He and his two brothers are proprietors of the concern; and the ‘Charlie’ of our school days has as much go-a-head-a-tiveness as any man I ever saw. Just as he was then in philosophy and chemistry, he is now among his workmen and furnaces. His lessons were without hitches and stumbles; his work goes on in the same way without jar or friction.”

“Such a boy can hardly fail of becoming an efficient man,” was the answer. “I know there may be exceptions to the rule, still, as a general thing, the character of the youth is a prophecy of his future history.”

"My Felix is ruined, then," replied the father. "I have been hoping he would take a turn and be fit for something as he grows older. I wish I had time to look after him a little."

Here he interrupted himself to ask his book-keeper whether an expected letter had been received from a Western firm with which business negotiations were pending. Next he engaged in a discussion with Captain Plympton, respecting the comparative advantages of two ships, one of which was a fast sailer and the other of larger burthen.

From the absorption of Mr. West in the theme, it might be inferred that he considered the subject important, and so it was, because it had a bearing upon the profits of the next voyage. Still, the man who was so careful of whatever affected his pecuniary interests, thought he had no time to watch over the welfare of his child. Place them in the balance together, worldly-wise parent! Golden dust in one scale, a human soul in the other, and then decide which of the twain justly demands the most care!

CHAPTER V.

CHESHIRE

“ Goodness and greatness are not means but ends;
Hath he not always treasures, always friends,
The good great man ? Three treasures, love and light,
And calm thoughts, equable as infant’s breath,
And three fast friends, more sure than day or night,
Himself, his Maker, and the angel death.”

ELLA looked up with a wistful glance, when her father mentioned the intended ride ; but his forbidding expression caused her to shrink away in tears. “ I don’t want the trouble of children,” he said to his wife, who pleaded for Ella. “ I always feel in danger of treading on nettles, every time I have one near me.”

“ She will not be troublesome to me,” urged the uncle, who thought the ride might give a color to the pale cheeks. “ I often have two or three children with me during my long rides,

and their merry prattle beguiles me from many sorrowful thoughts."

So Ella went, and her blue eyes opened in new wonders, when she saw broad fields, luxuriant in verdure, or dotted with flocks and herds. Mr. West perceived no beauty in the prospect, with its range of hill and plain, varied by occasional dwellings, with their surroundings of shade trees and flower gardens. Once he stopped the horse, where a stream dashed down from an opposite height. "That would be a fine mill site," he exclaimed. "It is a pity to let so much water run to waste." Just as if it did run to waste when it beautified the landscape, nurtured grass and flowers, and typified the Father's love, in the free outgushing of its waters. So it was through the entire ride. Caleb West continually suggested improvements; the word improvement being with him synonymous with increased means for making money. A level tract of land could be converted into house lots; a fine old forest into timber for ship-building;

and a ledge of granite into a row of warehouses.

These speculations were ended, by reaching a small stream fringed with willows, and mirroring in its clear depth the graceful sweep of tree-crowned hills, which betokened the vicinity of Cheshire. Soon, irregular buildings, with smoky chimneys became visible, and the whirr and clatter of machinery, mingled with the rushing sound of the waterfall. Mr. West here delivered his horse to a boy, who seemed to be one of the fixtures of the place, and the party proceeded on foot through a shady lane. Remembering she was put upon her good behavior, Ella walked quite circumspectly, till she saw a flower through a fissure in the wall, which proved too great a temptation. Her father uttered his favorite humph, but her uncle climbed the wall, and bore away a handful of the coveted treasures. Though they were only dandelions, to Ella, who had never before seen the golden-hued blossoms, they were more beautiful than japonicas.

Upon their arrival at the principal building, the travellers found the senior Taggart superintending his laborers. He was a man in the noon-day of life, with one of those bright faces, which unconsciously incline our own hearts to let in the sunshine. He advanced toward his visitors with extended hand, which changed into a prolonged grasp, when the merchant West presented his brother, with a reference to their early acquaintance.

“Edward West, my old school-fellow, whom I have not seen since our class left the Academy.” Such was the manufacturer’s greeting. “Don’t you recollect how you made us cry, when you delivered the Valedictory, teachers and boys together? and the warm-hearted man actually shed tears, the memory was so touching.” “That dear old class is strangely scattered,” he resumed. “Denton is a judge out West; Cole has become an Eastern nabob; the dull, thick-headed Eaton, plods over his farm, as he did his arithmetic; Mortimer is the first architect in the city; Stanley is a

missionary in the Pacific; the merry, light-hearted Parker, sleeps under the sod; and poor Ingalls totters about the street, a common drunkard. I never seem to realize how much I am changed, except when I look at these bearded men, whom I knew as careless school-boys."

"You have not grown old," responded Dr. West. "Wrinkles and grey hairs have delayed their coming."

"I have striven to keep my heart young," was the answer. "Men in this working, driving world, grow old before their time. They plunge into business, to the neglect of mind and heart, and hurry through life at the speed of a rail-car, with scarcely a thought of their fellow travellers, or their Maker. The engine must be stronger than iron to bear such pressure."

The merchant winced. "The work has got to be done," he pleaded, "whether the engine gives out or not."

"Not so," replied Mr. Taggart, gravely.

“Men overload themselves, and then talk about being crushed by responsibilities.”

After more conversation of this character, Mr. Taggart took his guests over the establishment. Ella clung to her uncle in childish fear, upon reaching the furnaces, where the red hot iron bars writhed and twisted like fiery serpents. The sturdy laborers seized the glowing metal in their tongs, and, after a series of hammerings and poundings, threw it back, for a repetition of the process. Notwithstanding the intense heat, most of the workmen had contented faces, which lighted up with smiles at the approach of their master. The cause of this became apparent. In Mr. Taggart's passage through the building, he commended one, encouraged another, made a kind inquiry of a third, and gave a caution to a fourth. “That is too much for you, Peter,” he said to a boy bending under a heavy weight. “Wait five years till you get a man's strength.”

“It's a man's wages he gives him for all

that ; good luck to his kind soul," ejaculated a broad-shouldered Irishman, who was shovelling coal into the furnace. Mr. Taggart now being called away, a few words from the Hibernian, told the whole story. When Peter's father died, three months previous, the boy resolved to support his brothers and sisters. Though he was neither strong nor agile, Mr. Taggart paid him full wages, and at the same time, assigned him an easy service. "It's me-self that thinks more of his religion for the likes o' that," continued the Irishman. "Father McClure, in the old country, himself, said, the best potatoes niver grow on poor soil."

Here another visitor appeared in the heated atmosphere. This was a young girl, habited in a thin rose-colored texture, with a straw hat fancifully adorned with a wreath of wild flowers. As she flitted among the furnaces, scattering kind words and smiles on her way, the men respectfully lifted their hats, and stepped aside to let her pass. "Och, and she's a beauty," exclaimed the Irishman, with

a glow of admiration on his red face, "and we're all proud of her, the darlint. Don't she come to the houses and teach the children, and show the mother's how to kape clean?"

"This is my daughter Agnes," said Mr. Taggart, who returned just as the fair girl reached them. "Agnes, these two gentlemen were school friends of your father, when he was about your age. We had many a merry game together, and quite as many heart-aches over geometry and Cicero."

"How glad you must be to see them, father," she exclaimed, after saluting the guests.

"I am glad," he replied, and to help me show it, "I want you to take this tired little girl," pointing to Ella, "and give her a nice lunch of our country bread and milk. Tell your mother to have an early tea, with plenty of strawberries and cream."

"Strawberries," repeated Mr. West, "I have scarcely seen one in the market yet, and these few cost too much for common use."

"My vines under glass are in full fruitage,"

replied Mr. Taggart, "though those in the garden are not out of bloom. I must take you to the garden and green-house after we leave this dingy place."

After Ella walked away with Agnes, the gentlemen went over the various departments of the manufactory. In one room, long and narrow like a rope-walk, was a countless multitude of wheels, bands and pulleys, all in harmonious motion. "How wonderful," said Dr. West, "that among so many springs, screws, and levers, none should come into collision."

"The starting of one little pin, if neglected, would cause disorder enough to stop the whole," answered Mr. Taggart. "I sometimes bring my children here, and tell them that, just so, one wrong step will affect the whole life."

Here, as elsewhere, the manufacturer addressed his men like reasonable beings instead of mere machines, and, as a natural consequence, each sturdy toiler held himself erect in the dignity of manhood. There was no cring-

ing servility in their intercourse with their employer, neither was there that low familiarity which is repulsive to every high-toned mind. After a call at the counting-room, which, cheerful and spacious, was shaded by a large elm with branches drooping quite to the windows, Mr. Taggart took his friends through the village that had sprung up around the premises.

"Piazzas, shade-trees and flower-gardens," exclaimed Caleb West. "Such things don't pay. The sooty looking men over yonder can hardly appreciate these fanciful appendages."

"You are mistaken, my friend," rejoined Mr. Taggart. "I think I never made a better investment than when ten years ago, I bought a box of flower-seeds and a hundred or more roots and shrubs, on purpose to give the men."

"Did you double your money?"

"No, we doubled the men. Instead of spending their leisure in gambling or drinking, most of them began to work in their gardens, and the culture of fruit and flowers, especially with the younger portion, has superseded the claims of puppet shows and mountebanks."

“Whether my clerks spend their evenings in a drinking saloon or prayer meeting is no concern of mine, provided they do my work well,” said Mr. West.

“They will not continue to do it well if they frequent the former place,” replied Mr. Taggart. “But, my friend,” and he laid his hand on the merchant’s arm, “ought you not to take an interest in their welfare? In my opinion, employers have a duty to those in their service, in some degree resembling that of parent to child. One reason why so many young men are ruined in the city, is because no friendly voice warns them of danger.”

While thus conversing they reached Mr. Taggart’s house, a large, square mansion, built in the preceding century, the entrance to which was through a terraced yard over broad steps of granite. Two stately lime trees were on each side the gate, rare flowering shrubs, varied by an occasional evergreen, bordered the path, and the columns of the portico were draped with creeping vines, rich in flowers and

foliage. From the front door, which stood invitingly open, in token of its owner's hospitality, came the sound of childish voices, the sweetest of all music because it gushes from an untroubled heart.

"Are these all yours?" inquired Mr. West, as he pressed through the merry group of little ones playing in the hall.

"Not exactly," was the laughing answer, and the large-hearted man smoothed the curls of one, patted another on the cheek, caught the two smallest in his arms, and exchanged kisses with a shy little girl, who crept up timidly from behind. "The children of my two brothers are only second to my own, and we live pretty much like one large family."

The room into which the visitors were ushered was pleasant, with cheerful paper, bright carpet, sunny pictures, inviting easy chairs, and drowsy looking sofas, yet with none of its appointments too good to be used or to be enjoyed. "I believe in making the most of the present," Mr. Taggart said, in answer to a remark

from Dr. West. "Some men wear away their lives in labor, foolishly looking forward to a time when they shall have earned the right to take, what they call, comfort. The season for which they wait seldom comes, and when it does, they have lost the capacity for enjoyment. They are like a friend who took a pleasure tour, but who, in his eagerness to reach his journey's end at a given time, would scarcely look at an object of interest along the route. Life is a longer journey, whose sunshine and shadow are mostly determined by the traveller himself."

Apparently Mr. Taggart's path was all sunshine, as any one would have thought, who sat at his lavish table, encircled by bright faces, or walked afterwards with the brothers West in his garden. The latter was varied by winding paths, with a fringe of bloom, flower-beds in a setting of verdant turf, arbors gracefully festooned with climbing vines and creepers, and a miniature pond where silvery trout darted among the aquatic plants. Farther on were a

green-house and grapery, one tempting to the eye and the other to the appetite, and beyond these was the fruit garden, exceedingly promising in appearance, though the season of fruit was not yet.

“You have all the comforts of life without its trials,” sighed Mr. West, when they reached the asparagus bed. Asparagus was daily on the merchant’s table, from the time its tender shoots appeared in the market, till it was displaced by a new luxury. “You are not in fear of losing half your property by some dishonest rogue, neither are you fretted to death by the mistakes of blundering clerks and book-keepers. Then, instead of pining for a breath of fresh air like me, you have this beautiful home away from the dust and hurry;” and again he sighed.

Was it fancy, or did a responsive sigh come in answer to his own? A shadow crossed Mr. Taggart’s brow as he responded, “You have not seen all. If you will walk farther, I will show you something more.”

They went from the garden by a foot-path that soon opened into a green lane overshadowed by pines and firs. It was very quiet there ; so quiet that the voice of a robin singing to its mate had more of sadness in it than of song. The sunlight glowed upon the trees, long shadows stretched over the grass, and the brothers, without knowing why, felt a shadow stealing over their hearts. They moved on with their voices strangely hushed, until Mr. Taggart paused before an iron gate.

“ I could not let you go,” he said, “ until I show you where my dead sleep. You saw the bright faces around my table ; others once as bright and as dearly loved are gathered here.”

Dr. West followed his friend into the enclosure, where two grassy mounds, checkered with alternate light and shade from the waving boughs, told of a vacant place in the home and a great sorrow in the heart. “ Lilius, aged three, early transplanted ; ” “ Ernest, aged fifteen, gone home to heaven ; ” such were the inscriptions on the marble scroll at the head of each grave.

“They went the same summer,” sobbed the father; “first little Lily, with her sweet smiles and childish carresses, then Ernest, the noble boy who early learned to love God and man. Oh! how I tried to keep him back when I heard his heavenly Father call. I thought I needed him most,” and the tears of the bereaved man moistened the green sod. “God took him,” he resumed, “and sometimes I rejoice to know I have two children safe on the other side. Not always, for human faith is weak, human love strong, and the stricken heart cries out for its lost ones, like Rachel refusing to be comforted.”

While he was speaking, Dr. West moved to his side, and folded his hand in a sympathetic pressure. How wonderful is the bond of Christian fellowship! Without the utterance of a word the two men felt themselves one in Jesus, and their souls held communion with each other and with him. Perhaps induced by that unspoken sympathy, after they again reached the garden, Mr. Taggart led his

friends to a rustic arbor perched on a knoll, which commanded a view of the whole grounds. While detailing his plans for improvement, some of which extended into future years, he placed the hand of Dr. West upon his own heart. That pressure disclosed an unsuspected secret ! Though Mr. Taggart stood erect in the noonday of life, with apparent health on his cheek, the irregular heart-beat, now a full, vigorous stroke, now a faint, fluttering motion, revealed disease in the very citadel of life.

“Do not fear to utter your thoughts,” he said, when Dr. West continued silent. “I know the nature of the difficulty. My heart is seriously affected, and although prolonged life is not impossible, at any moment I may be called to give up my account.”

“It is so,” was the reply. “There is disease ; still its work may be deferred.”

“For the last five years,” resumed Mr. Taggart, “I have lived in the presence chamber of death. I have striven to familiarize myself

with the last enemy, so that at his coming he be not utterly a stranger."

"Yet you plan and act with reference to the future," exclaimed Caleb West, with sudden vehemence. "If I were in your place, I should give up business and sit down seriously to prepare for death."

"How?" was the simple query.

"I should pray, read the Bible, and turn religious," and here he stopped, dissatisfied with his own answer.

"We ought to do all that in order to live right," replied Mr. Taggert, "and he alone who thus lives, is prepared for death. I want to leave the world better than I found it; so every day I try to do as I should if I certainly knew it would be the last one given for labor. I may not live to eat the fruit of this vine, or see the full development of my plans, still, I will set out vines and work for those who are to come after me."

Not comprehending views so antagonistic to his selfish spirit, Mr. West strayed down the

path under pretence of another look at the pond, leaving his brother to converse with Mr. Taggart upon themes in which both were interested. Love, duty, immortality, heaven ! Their hearts glowed while they dwelt upon these topics, and the radiance that lighted up their faces, was a faint foreshadowing of the blessedness arising from the communion of the saints above. Though that interview will never end, all earthly ones must ; so after a season of sweet fellowship, the two men separated. They had not before met since they were school boys ; they might not meet again until all earthly discipline was over. What wonder was it that smiles and tears blended in the parting moment ?

CHAPTER VI.

UNREST.

"Why dost thou heap up wealth which thou must quit,
Or what is worse, be left by it?
Why dost thou load thyself when thou'rt to fly,
O, man, ordained to die?"

THOSE heart is not more susceptible of tender thought at twilight? Link between day and night, hung often with golden clouds and golden memories, its gentle breath partly relaxes the pressure of worldliness, and leaves the spirit free to soar into a higher region of contemplation. It must have been the influence of the hour, together with Ella's childish delight at the glowing skies, that softened Caleb West during the ride back to the city. At a turn in the road, where a changing panorama of the clouds was revealed in its full splendor, he checked the horse, to give the little girl a longer view.

“ I haven’t seen such a sunset since I was a boy, Edward,” he abruptly exclaimed. “ Don’t you recollect how mother loved to look at the clouds ? ”

“ Yes, Caleb, I scarcely see a gorgeous sunset without thinking how you and I used to sit beside her at twilight, and watch the sky till the stars came out.”

“ I haven’t been so near heaven any time since. I wish I was a boy now,” and there was sadness as well as bitterness in the tone.

“ Nay, brother, you would not relinquish all you have gained, learned and enjoyed, to be a boy like that,” and he pointed to a barefooted lad who was driving a cow in front of the carriage, and whistling a tune as he walked.

“ Yes,” was the deliberate answer. “ I would give up all my business experience, and the hard won earnings of years for that boy’s light heart and youthful feeling. To-morrow I shall not think so ; I shall be as eager in the race as ever, but to-day everything looks bare and meagre, and if I had a chance to

make a thousand dollars, I don't believe I would take the trouble. Money is not much, after all. When I began business I thought if I ever became worth fifty thousand dollars I should not want any more, but I suppose I own twice that, and the whole does not look as large as a five dollar gold piece I had when I was a boy. It is a hard world when we come to think of it soberly, without a single thing worth living for."

"I think you are mistaken, Caleb," was the mild reply. "Every day I have cause to thank my Maker for life, and to thank him too, that he made me a man rather than a horse or a dog. The world looks brighter to me every year, because I see more of God's love in it."

"I see more of man's deceit and treachery," was the answer, "and sometimes I grow sick of my race and myself too, when I witness the shifts and artifice that are used to make wrong seem right."

Thus the brothers conversed during the ride; one hopeful and happy, because his heart,

purified by the breath of God, gave out a fountain of sweet waters ; the other sad and desponding, because he drank only at the bitter springs of selfish worldliness. Untaught by disappointment, he continued to tread the same path, and, when his brother entered the warehouse the next morning, he was projecting new schemes of gain with feverish excitement.

“ A broad street with house lots on both sides, or a road extending along the river with a short alley running at right angles with the principal thoroughfare,—I can't for the life of me, tell which will be the best.” So he murmured, tracing lines and marks on paper as he spoke, which he soon ceased, to re-commence the process in a different form. Perhaps in the hope of some useful suggestion, he put down his pen long enough to explain the nature of his uncertainty. Among his recent speculations was one in real estate, which comprised a lot of land near the track of a new railroad. The question was, how he should dispose of it so as to double his money, the idea of a less profit not being entertained.

"I got it for a song," he said with a satisfied smile. "The old ladies who owned it thought the railroad would ruin their property, and, in their panic, jumped at the first offer. I knew its value would be doubled, but I made things look so black to them, that at last they were ready to thank me for taking it off their hands."

At these words, Arthur Temple, the new boy, who had been deputed to copy a long account, looked up with a puzzled expression. Though the merchant did not observe the boy, he saw the shadow on the face of his brother. "I know what you would say, Edward," he resumed. "You are ready to quote the golden rule, and tell me I had no right to take advantage of the two credulous old women. The golden rule is a good thing in its way, and it works well among a family of children who are all after the best orange or the largest piece of cake, but it don't do for men who are to make a living by trade."

Again the boy looked up, apparently swallowing every word.

“It was given for daily life,” replied the doctor, gently. “I need to practice it when roused from my bed, with the thermometer at zero, to visit patients who only pay for my services by finding fault with the prescription, and you in the daily business intercourse between man and man, when temptations come to fill your pocket at the expense of another.”

“We do have terrible temptations sometimes,” said Mr. Howard, who had entered in season to hear the last remark. “I have just been through one in which I found myself weaker than a bruised reed.”

“Let us hear about it,” said Mr. West. I thought you were bullet proof, as soldiers say.”

“I had a private despatch from Captain Mercer, stating that the cargo he was bringing into port would be nearly a total loss, as it was badly damaged. While I was thinking over the matter, an old speculator came in who, without any questions, offered to take the whole ship-load at his own risk, and allow me

a handsome bonus. It was a temptation, particularly as I depended on a portion of the profits from that voyage, to indulge my eldest son in a pleasure trip to Greece and the Holy Land, a scheme on which he has had his heart set through his whole college course."

"So your foolish scruples kept you from a good bargain," responded Mr. West. Well, you will do to go with my brother here, who, during his two days' visit has preached half a dozen sermons about loving my neighbor."

"I could not have done otherwise without dishonesty," said Mr. Howard. "You do not approve of that."

"Certainly not," was the reply. "I never cheated a man yet, and I never mean to do it; but if he cheats himself it is his look out, not mine, by any manner of means. These old speculators who seek to monopolize all the profits deserve to be bit."

"Pardon me," returned Mr. Howard, "but it seems to me that your distinction is like the difference between pushing a man into a pit,

and suffering him to lie there when he had fallen in himself."

The merchant now returned to his house lots, the plan of which he wished to discuss with a land surveyor whom he momentarily expected. Felix called on his way from school to take his uncle on a tour of sight-seeing through the principal streets of the city. Dr. West had not forgotten his boyhood ; accordingly, in his walk, beside a call at the Antiquarian Rooms and the Public Garden, he went with his nephew to the play-ground, where the boys had their games, the pond where they skated in winter, and even looked in at the store where they bought limes and oranges in the hot summer days.

"Father never comes here with me," said Felix. "I don't believe he knows where the school-house is. I wanted him to go to the examination the year after I was admitted into the High School, but he said he had enough to do without being bored with boy's lessons. Nobody cares whether I do well or not ; so it

don't make much difference," continued the lad whose heart yearned for sympathy as flowers for sunlight. "Father blames me for going out in the evening. I should not, if I knew what to do with myself at home. We don't take much comfort at our house."

This remark was verified by subsequent occurrences. The family were gathered in the back parlor after tea, Mr. West, with his inseparable companion the evening paper, and Mrs. West, quite out of temper on account of the threatened departure of her cook. To relieve her mind she enumerated a long list of grievances incident to house-keeping, prominent among which were the faults of servants. Mr. West retorted angrily, when she interrupted him the fifth time, in the column of ship news, to ask some question relative to her domestic concerns. This provoked a bitter response from the wife, which was followed in its turn by a rejoinder from the husband, almost mocking in its coldness. Two of the younger children, imitating the parental example, now be-

gan to contend about a toy. Lucia ran up stairs to escape from the scene of strife, and Felix, who was playing chess with his uncle, uttered an impatient exclamation. At this moment, a low, clear whistle was heard from the sidewalk, followed by a quick cough, three times repeated. Felix began to be uneasy, and made a random move on the chess-board, that nearly cost him his queen. He quite lost it upon the renewal of the cough, and, after hurrying through the game, with a stealthy look at his father, who had gone from the ship news to price current, he left the room. The father was too much engrossed, and the mother too much heated to notice his departure; neither were comments made, though more than an hour passed ere his return. When he came, instead of joining the household group, he stole up stairs with a cat-like tread, in evident fear of being heard.

"Felix is in danger," said Dr. West, when the brothers were alone.

"I know it," returned the father. "The boy is determined to ruin himself."

"Save him, Caleb," was the earnest response. "A year hence it may be too late."

"I have done all I could," replied Mr. West. "I have bought him books, sent him to school, kept him well clothed and fed, given him money when he asked for it, still he steals away with an idle, worthless set of boys, every chance he can get. I don't see what more I can do."

"Do what mother did for us when we were boys. Gain his confidence, teach him to love home, show an interest in his pursuits, and take an occasional hour from business to share in some of his boyish pleasures."

"Perhaps you are right," was the answer; "but a man pressed and worried half to death, don't have time for such things."

The next morning Dr. West prepared to depart. "I am sorry to have you go, Edward," said the merchant. "You brought the pure breeze that sweeps down from the mountains into the heat and dust of my slavish life. Perhaps I should be a better man if I saw you oftener."

Tears came to the eyes of the other brother, as he answered, "There are only two of us left, Caleb, and we ought not to let years pass between our meetings."

"It shall not be so always," replied Mr. West. "I am going to give up business before long. I am glad you did not sell the old homestead, for I mean to buy it back, and settle down where I can get some comfort out of life. That is the goal to which I look forward."

It was useless to tell the worldly man that the goal was already within his reach, so with a simple word of farewell the brothers separated. Felix walked with his uncle to the railroad station, carrying the valise, and a certain mysterious package, which was his present to his cousin May. As the morning was warm, for the sake of shortening the distance, they turned into a narrow street with dilapidated houses and two or three grocer's shops of the lowest description. In the window of the last one were displayed a tumbler of cigars, and

another of colored candy, a plate of musty oranges, and a few heart-shaped cakes, apparently equally musty. In the doorway stood a man smoking a short, black pipe, with his hands thrust into his pockets, his coat foul with tobacco juice, and a light cravat twisted round his neck over very dirty linen. At the sight of this man Felix drew closely to his uncle, and held the valise in a way that partially screened his features. The feint was unsuccessful, however, as the man with the pipe left the doorstep and placed his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Well, my young gentleman," he began, in a tone of mingled triumph and obsequiousness, "is it perfectly convenient for you to pay that little bill?"

Felix strove to pass on without speaking, but the strong grasp on his arm compelled him to stop. "Not now," he faltered, "to-morrow."

"Now, my fine fellow; I may not set eyes on you to-morrow."

“Uncle,” exclaimed Felix, in a tone of real distress, the cause of which was soon made known. At this miserable place Felix and his young companions had spent a portion of the previous evening, drinking strong beer, and listening to the low talk of the proprietor and his customers. By some means the lads had thrown down a waiter containing a decanter and several tumblers, for which Felix was expected to make restitution. While the owner now demanded his money for his broken glass, a motley crowd gathered, composed of haggard women, intemperate men, and ragged boys who dwelt in the vicinity.

“Uncle, help me,” again implored Felix, as one of the latter began to taunt him with threats of the court-room and jail.

“On one condition,” was the reply; “that you never cross this threshold again.” The promise was given, the money paid, and Dr. West drew his nephew from the dangerous neighborhood.

“Oh! uncle, don’t despise me,” Felix sob-

bed, as soon as they turned the corner. "You are the only one who has spoken a kind word to me for a whole year, and don't hate me now."

"I love you, my dear boy, and because I love you I want to see you good and happy. You cannot be either if you go to such places. The boys who lead you away from school, and whistle for you in the evening, are your worst enemies."

"I know it, uncle," sighed the lad. "They don't care for me except to get my money, but I can't shake them off. They wait for me in courts and follow me around the streets, and I have to go with them."

"You choose to go," was the decided response. "Say no, and let them see you mean no, and they will soon cease to trouble you. From this day forth, avoid bad boys as you would a pestilence."

The station was now in sight, consequently the parting injunction was brief. "I should do better, if I had you always," said Felix. "I have wanted to be good since you came here."

"Come to me in the next vacation," answered the uncle, kindly. "I have spoken to your mother about it. I shall want your company in some of my long rides over the hills, and you can help Frank in the garden, and May with her drawing. Blueberries will be ripe then, and you have not forgot the famous times you had when you were there before."

"I will come, uncle," was the earnest response, "and I will try to do right, too. I shall fail, I know," was added in a sorrowful tone. "I have made resolutions before and always broke them."

"Frank had the same difficulty, but since he asked God to help him he don't fail so often. Ask him to help you too."

The last sentence was spoken in the cars, whither Felix had followed the departing traveller. "Remember," was the last utterance, "keep away from bad boys, strive to improve in everything, and may God bless you."

The iron horse began to puff more violently the bell rang, and Felix sprang from the car.

As the train moved slowly from the station-house, Dr. West saw him waving a handkerchief, and brushing away the tears.

What could be done for the weak, tempted youth, was the question that occupied his uncle's thoughts during the journey homeward. The query remained unanswered with respect to human agencies, but there is a Father above who watches over his children, even when earthly parents neglect, or imperfectly perform their delegated trust. In his hands we leave the erring, misguided Felix.

CHAPTER VII.

CASTLE BUILDING.

"Here, then, at last, my dust-soiled feet are treading
The old home-paths of boyhood's vanished prime;
The same green oaks above my head are waving,
The brook's low ripple have the same low chime."

CALEB WEST promised to visit his brother during the summer, but July came, with the sweet smell of new mown grass, followed by August, whose hot breath dried the brooks and matured the grain, without a fulfilment of the promise. Once a letter found its way to the village, which spoke of an expected vessel, a great pressure of cares, new business arrangements, and no time for rest or friendship. The vacation also passed without the coming of Felix, and Frank and May gathered blueberries alone. Both were disappointed, particularly

May, who, with a sigh over her unsatisfactory drawing, often wished that her city cousin, who, she did not doubt, was both good and handsome, were at hand to make her stiff trunks more gnarled, or her heads more life-like. Though she tried to imitate the wreath of autumn leaves, painted in water-colors, he had sent by her father, she was obliged to confess she could not so blend the tints, or copy nature upon paper.

When October came with crimson on the sky and forest, the merchant and his wife unexpectedly arrived. The lady's face was tearful, and she nervously grasped her brother's hand, with a look into his kind face for sympathy. Ella was dead, and her parents brought the little worn out frame where they could lay it beside kindred dust, in the village burying ground.

"She faded and wasted all through the summer," murmured the mother, "apparently never very sick, yet gradually giving up one thing after another. In the spring she could walk to the common, then only half way, after-

ward, two or three streets, and finally to the end of the square. Thus she grew weaker and weaker, and before her father could see any change, the poor child could not come down stairs. We had the most skilful doctor in the city, but he said he could only palliate the disease without any hope of cure."

Here the mother's tears flowed afresh, and the father continued the recital. "Ella was not made to live long; some flowers wither in the morning. When I proposed to take her to the springs or into the country, the doctor advised us to let her be quiet where she was. I did not see her many times the last week. I could not do her any good, and it seemed to worry her when I went into the room."

The next morning the brothers stood beside the little lifeless form arrayed in white, the livery of heaven. Frank and May had strewn pale asters and sweet mignonette among the spotless drapery, and placed a fresh rose bud in the hand and another in the bosom. There be some who liken death to sleep, yet surely

never did earthly sleeper wear a look like that of Ella. It was death in the fixed eyes partly visible through the veiled lids, death in the colorless lips hushed in eternal silence, death in the stony cheeks, no more to flush with the life-tide, death even in the light hair parted away smoothly from the forehead. Caleb West was exceedingly moved while standing by his dead child, and he pressed his brother's hand with a tenderness long foreign to his nature.

"I never cared much for Ella when she was living," he said, she was not pretty or playful like the others, and I used to complain because she was often fretful; but oh! brother, when death comes and takes away our own flesh and blood, it makes things look different."

That they might continue to look different until the heart hitherto engrossed in the pursuit of riches, should seek its highest treasure above, was his brother's prayer.

Ella was sepulchred beside her grandparents, in the corner of the church-yard where

the locusts grew, and when her father placed her there, he apparently entombed every remembrance of his lost child with her buried form. While she was with him, pale and cold, while he could see her face eloquent in its very silence, his heart was softened; yet as soon as the grave folded her in its bosom, old purposes resumed their sway, and the tide of worldliness, restrained for a moment, became more tumultuous in its flow. He began to talk of business, being almost unwilling to remain long enough for his wife to recover from her fatigue. Not that he intended to be unkind, but there was merchandise to be stored, a railroad meeting to be attended, bills of sale to be made out, and a transfer of property to be legally executed. During a ride with his brother around the outskirts of the town, he surveyed the fine old farms with a speculator's eye, eager to transform them, Midas like, into gold.

His thoughts received a sudden diversion upon approaching a weather-beaten house surrounded by a rough board fence. Not a tree

threw its shade over the premises, dock and nettles filled the front yard, except in one corner, where a pig was rooting, and two children with bare heads and feet, playing, both the brute and the human in evident enjoyment of the companionship. A man, who might have been taken for a scare-crow, so dilapidated were his garments, was busy in the garden, and on the other side of the fence, a lean, half-starved cow, strove to make a meal of the corn-stalks he occasionally flung over.

"Comfortless, comfortless," replied the merchant, at the sight. "If I were that man I would move out West, or go to California, in hopes to better my fortune."

"It is not necessary," replied the doctor; he is rich enough now, but foolishly hoards up his money, while he stints himself and family in the common necessities of life."

"Why does he do so?"

"From a mistaken idea that wealth is the chief good. He bought this farm twenty years ago with the single determination to grow

rich. He has accomplished his object at the sacrifice of all other things which most men prize, and he has reaped his reward. His wife died in a mad-house, one son drowned himself in a pond, and his remaining children are of course, ignorant and wicked. I believe God prepares a retribution in this world for those who disregard His laws."

A silence now ensued, which continued until Dr. West inquired for Felix, with an allusion to the disappointment he felt in not receiving the expected visit.

"Little comfort you would have taken with him," replied the father, "and I told him so. He had his trunk packed ready to start when I found out in some way that he had been put back a year for failing to keep up with his class. I had a talk with him that made him change his mind, I suppose, for the next morning I heard him tell his mother that Frank and May would not want to see him."

"Does he go with those boys, now?"

"Yes, I met him not long ago with two of

the worst in the city ; boys I would not trust with a single copper, and who would have been in prison long ago if they had not been too cunning for their tricks to be found out. The city is a terrible place for boys, and I often wonder how any one brought up there can come to a respectable manhood, yet some do. Mr. Howard's eldest son is the most promising young man I know, smart as a trap, and true as steel, and the two others are growing up in the same way."

Here the brothers approached the old homestead, where the early life of both was passed. Touching memories cluster around such a spot, especially if it be hallowed by a parent's prayers. The boy, beside whose bed his mother nightly breathes a petition, whose little hand is clasped in that of his father at the family altar, cannot in manhood utterly escape from these influences. He may plunge into sin, his heart may be hardened by contact with the world, still, there are moments when the sear-ed conscience will throb, and the strong man

become a child again. Caleb West was strangely stirred as he stood in the porch of his early home. Above one of the columns which supported the roof, was a swallow's nest, the very one, he thought that was there when he was a boy. The old mulberry tree had been cut down, but the elms in front were growing still, as were also the lilacs and rose bushes in the yard.

Thence he went to the garden, the same garden where his back had ached and his hands been blistered with hoeing, digging and weeding. Squashes and tomatoes were ripening in the sun, cabbages held their heads erect in a kind of self-satisfied dignity, and currant bushes stretched along the wall, just where he picked currants for his mother to stew long ago. The Bartlett pear tree he and his brother set out a score of years before, had grown tall and sturdy, with a few ripe pears still clinging to its branches. Leaning against its trunk, the man who did not weep when he left the grave of his child, shed bitter tears.

“Don’t think me weak and foolish, Edward,” he said in apology, “my nerves are all unstrung, and if I don’t go back to business soon, I shall become a downright baby.”

The softer feeling was transient, succeeded by a cool investigation into the natural advantages of the place. A few acres of land lay beyond the garden, a part covered with a thrifty growth of apple trees, bounded by a potato patch on one side, and a luxuriant corn-field on the other. On the extreme verge was a little dell shaded by magnificent maples and walnuts, in which a cool spring flashed and bubbled in the sunlight.

Here the merchant stopped. “I have quite made up my mind to buy back the old place before many years,” he said, “and I mean to have the water of this spring carried to the house. No other water ever tasted like it,” and he bore a draught to his lips in the hollow of his hand. “I have longed for it sometimes in the heat of the counting room, as I imagine David did for water from the well by the gate of Bethlehem. You see,” he added with a

smile, "I have not forgotten all the Bible stories I read when I was a boy."

"He walked along until he reached the fence, which, in several places, leaned on one side, with other tokens of decay. "Here I must have a strong, solid wall," he resumed, and advancing a few paces, "here a good substantial gate. I shall extend the garden so as to include the potato field, and surround it all with a hedge. This place can almost be made a Paradise."

"It takes time brother, to carry out plans," suggested the doctor. "Why not begin now?"

"And leave my business, when I am making money faster than ever before. No, a few more years of success and then I lay aside the yoke." He paused upon again reaching the house. "I shall build a new wing, alter the entry into a broad hall from end to end, have broad windows opening to the ground instead of these seven by nine squares, and pull down the west chimney to give a chance for folding doors between the two rooms. There will be space for a cir-

cular drive to the rear of the hall, and in the enclosed place I can set out a few shrubs and trees. The front fence will have to come down, and with it the lilacs and syringas. Well, it will be laying waste to build up in a better form. Not a word of moralizing," he continued, seeing his brother about to speak. "Not a word about devoting part of my money to charity for I have already decided upon that. When I have accumulated enough to live at ease and give away without feeling it, then I shall come and act without being hampered by want of means."

Dr. Haley, the pastor of the village church, now approached the brothers. He had been their mother's minister when they were school-boys, and during her last sickness, his prayers and words had been to her as the gentle rain to the thirsty earth. Earnest laborers like him, bear the trace of time on form and feature, though the heart be young, and Dr. Haley walked with a feeble step, leaning on his cane. He greeted the two Wests with a smile, he

always smiled when he spoke, and then alluded to the memories which their presence in that spot awakened.

“I was thinking, last night, Caleb,” he proceeded, “how you came to bid me good-bye the evening before you went to your clerkship in the city, and it seemed but a few days since you knelt in my study while I committed you to the care of Almighty God. You have been greatly prospered, I hear.”

“Yes,” for Caleb West made no secret of his riches. “I went to the city with ten dollars in my pocket ; I stuck to my business, earned money before I spent it, kept out of bad company, never drank a glass of any kind of liquor in my life, and now there are few names that stand better in commercial circles than mine.”

The conversation might have been prolonged, had not a man in a wagon accosted the minister with an invitation to ride. “I am going as far as the saw-mill to see about my logs,” he continued, “and while I am at the mill, you can call and see old Mrs. Greeley.”

"That is the way our minister has to do," said Dr. West, after the wagon passed on. "He is not able to walk to the outskirts of the parish, now, so the offer of a ride is a great favor."

"He ought to keep a horse," replied the merchant. "He has walked long enough."

"He can't afford money for the purchase. With his youngest boy in college, and the children of his dead son to feed and clothe, his small salary barely carries him through the year. Brother, Dr. Haley did a great deal for us when we were fatherless boys, suppose you give him a horse and carriage."

"I," and the rich man fairly leaped from the ground in amazement.

"Yes, I have longed to do it myself, but a country doctor can't be very lavish of money. I have tried to pay back some of the kindnesses received from our good minister in other days, though all I have done is very little. If you were to buy him a horse and carriage, you would not feel it after you signed the check in payment."

"Perhaps not. I lost a thousand dollars the other day without minding it, but to give away two or three hundred to an old parson, in return for good advice and a few prayers twenty or thirty years ago, is paying rather heavy interest."

"Caleb," interposed the doctor, "I believe next to mother's influence, the counsels of Dr. Haley helped us resist the temptations to which every youth is exposed. A letter, which I had from him when I was at college, helped me in my hardest struggle between duty and inclination. Perhaps it saved me from ruin."

"He took a fatherly interest in us, I grant, and when I come here to live, I mean to show him I have not forgotten it. Then, perhaps, he shall have the horse and carriage, or something towards it. Let your people have a subscription; it would be only a trifle for each one."

No more was said upon the subject, and when the brothers re-entered their carriage, they resumed their conversation about the old homestead. Dr. West made several calls on

the way home. One to a poor widow in a weather-beaten house, where the wind whistled through the crevices, another to an Irish boy, sick in the room where the family cooked, ate and slept; a third, to a young seamstress, in the last stages of consumption, uncared for, and almost unattended, and the fourth, to a wealthy man, one of the most prominent citizens of the place. The merchant, meanwhile, sat in the carriage, or, if the call were long, as it was to the Irish boy, walked up and down the street in search of old landmarks.

“Where do you spend most time?” he inquired, when his brother returned. “Not where they pay best, judging from appearances.”

“Where they need me most,” was the characteristic answer. “Esq. Draper has an excellent nurse, careful to follow every direction, and his home is supplied with every comfort; poor little Michael does not have his face washed properly, unless I do it under pretence of bathing his head, so you see where my duty lies.”

“ Shall you get anything for your services ? ”

“ No, the father is intemperate, and only works when the bottle is empty, the mother is shiftless, discouraged and intolerably filthy.”

“ Why do you go there ? I don’t sell goods unless there is a reasonable chance to get back more than I give.”

“ Because I am not placed in the world to live wholly for myself. If I can mitigate one pang of a suffering fellow-creature, or speak one word of hope or sympathy to a burdened heart, I feel that I am partly fulfilling my commission.”

“ I don’t profess to understand your notions. So you prefer poor patients to rich ones who can pay you ? ”

“ No, if all were poor I could not provide for my family which is the first duty of every man ; but when God puts the poor in my way, I consider that they have special claims on my attention. Some of them do pay by their gratitude. I doubt if a successful speculation ever

made your heart throb more joyfully, than mine did to-day, when Michael Leary kissed my hand after I bathed his head and shook up his pillows. Oh ! brother, it is a blessed privilege to minister to the children of want and suffering."

CHAPTER VIII.

ERRING ONES.

“ If ever in temptations strong,
Thou left'st the right path for the wrong,
If ever devious path thus trode,
Led thee still farther from the road,
Dread thou to speak presumptuous doom.”

THE winter following the death of little Ella passed without much intercourse between the brothers. At Christmas a box came to Mrs. West, from her city sister-in-law, containing a set of sable furs, designed as a token of gratitude for kindness and sympathy in the giver's hour of bereavement. The note which accompanied the present was very sad, tear-stained, it seemed, in several places, much to the surprise of May, who could not understand how a person as rich as her aunt could have cause for sorrow.

During the next summer a letter was received from Caleb as an apology for a visit. "I meant to come," he wrote, "and run about the fields and woods till I forgot that such things as day-book and ledger are in existence. But I can't do it yet. I shall stick to business till I can give up the whole concern altogether. In two more years of such success as I have had the past twelve month, I shall be able to execute all my plans. I have refused three times the original cost for the house lots I told you about, and now I intend to clear enough on that single piece of land to do all I propose to the homestead. Capt. Plympton has just got in from a grand voyage, and I am busy fitting him out for another. I have more irons in the fire than ever before, hurrying, you see, to get my work done that I may rest sooner." Thus ran the letter, without a word concerning his family, a single expression of brotherly interest, or even an allusion to the stone that was to be placed on the grave of Ella. It had been before arranged that his brother should perform this last office.

Toward winter the villagers began to think of establishing a public library, and after several meetings for discussion, Dr. West was requested to visit the city to negotiate for the purchase of books. "Tell your brother Caleb," exclaimed Dr. Haley, who was as enthusiastic as a boy in the project, "that we shall expect him to make us a handsome donation. I have heard from half a dozen of our village boys who are doing business, and they all consider it a privilege to help on the good work."

With a secret misgiving that this part of his errand would prove a failure, Dr. West entered his brother's counting-room on a cold afternoon in January. The merchant was in his usual place at the desk, unchanged in personal appearance, unless his face had become more stern, and his manner more pre-occupied. After a little conversation, the principal topic of which was the rise in real estate, and the prosperous condition of mercantile affairs generally, Mr. West went to a drawer where he kept

loose change. He seemed to be counting the coin, a strange procedure, to be sure, for a man who reckoned his property by thousands. Once his eye flashed with a wild gleam, and when he a second time went over the silver, he brought down his hand with a threatening gesture on the drawer.

"Arthur," he shouted, in a voice which, though perfectly calm, had something ominous in its sound.

In obedience to the summons a youth entered, in whose bold, self-confident air, were few traces of the timid Arthur Temple, whom we first met in the same place a year and a half previous. "You wanted me to take this package to the express office, sir," he said taking up a parcel which lay on the table.

"No," and Mr. West's clenched hand came down with more violence than before. "Call Kimball and come back yourself."

In a moment he returned with the book-keeper, who was dressed in a new suit of gray that made his thin, bony figure look still more stiff and awkward.

"We have found the culprit, Kimball," Mr. West began, in a hard, cold tone. "I know how to account for the dimes that have disappeared in so strange a way from time to time."

The book-keeper's mouth twitched convulsively, but he made no comment.

"This boy whom I took out of charity," resumed the merchant, with his eye fixed steadily upon Arthur, "when I knew he would be worth little or nothing, this boy who pretended to be so honest that he couldn't make out a bill till he had scanned it half a dozen times; this boy," he continued, raising his voice still higher, "has abused my confidence, and pilfered from my money drawer."

Arthur stood by in the middle of the room, apparently unmoved by the accusation.

"I have missed money," Mr. West proceeded, "still I never suspected Arthur, until I saw him loitering around fruit stalls, and in confectionery stores. Determined to know with certainty, this morning I put five dollars in small change into the money drawer, and then went

out with Kimball to see about storing some goods. Arthur was there alone, and now there are fifteen cents less than when I put the money there two hours ago. Now, what have you to say for yourself?" The last words were to the youth, who had not changed his countenance during the recital.

"Nothing, except that you gave me my first lesson in cheating, and stealing is no worse."

"How," and the voice of the questioner was hoarse with passion.

"I heard you tell Mr. Howard that if people cheated themselves, it was no concern of yours. I remembered it, when by mistake you gave me half a dollar instead of a quarter, to buy a bottle of ink."

"And you kept the quarter, you young rogue."

"Yes, you cheated yourself," rejoined the boy, coldly. "There was no harm in taking that quarter."

"There certainly was in helping yourself from my drawer."

“It did not seem so bad after that first quarter. Before I came here I wouldn’t have touched a pin that belonged to somebody else. You made me think such scruples were old-fashioned, and Captain Plympton used to laugh about women’s notions of right and wrong. I know he cheated ; I’ve heard him boast of his cleverness in getting rid of a damaged cargo. You never said anything against it.”

“Kimball,” exclaimed Mr. West, now wrought to a high degree of anger, “take this boy to his mother, and tell her he is on the high road to State Prison. I wanted to befriend him for her sake ; she, poor woman, has enough to bear without this new trouble.”

At the mention of his mother, Arthur’s face instantly changed. The defiant expression passed away, and, cowering, he caught Mr. West’s hand. “Don’t send me home,” he pleaded in a tone strangely at variance with his former unconcern. “Don’t let mother know it, don’t ; it will kill her. Oh ! if I had

minded her, I shouldn't have touched that quarter."

"You should have thought of that before ; take him, Kimball."

"Oh! Mr. West," and Arthur clung to his knees. "I will never touch money again ; never, never, if you will only keep it from mother. When I carried home my last month's wages, she told me I was her greatest comfort."

"I never trust a boy who has deceived me once. Go, Kimball."

"Please, sir, I can't go to a woman on such business. I had rather face a whole regiment with a cannon in front ;" and the book-keeper, notwithstanding his sharp look, pretended to be very busy with the ledger, in order to conceal his emotion.

"Brother Caleb," the doctor began, when Mr. Howard entered. "Let me take the lad ; I will see his mother," pleaded the latter gentleman when he had heard a short version of the story.

"I had rather die than have any one go to

her," murmured Arthur, through his closely shut teeth. His face now resumed its defiant expression, and he stood proudly erect as if he no longer sought or desired forgiveness. It was fearful to witness such a look on the countenance of a mere lad, because boys of such natures may mature into hardened criminals.

"Try him once more, brother, for his dead father's sake," urged the doctor. "On your decision, perhaps, rests his temporal and spiritual doom."

"You mean well, Edward, but it's only mistaken kindness," was the rejoinder. "Such false sympathy fills our court rooms and jails. If offenders were dealt with according to their deserts, vice would be nipped in the bud and there would be an end of it."

"May I take him to his mother?" now pleaded Mr. Howard.

"I don't care where you take him, so that I never set eyes on him again," was the ungracious response.

"My poor erring boy," said Mr. Howard,

pressing his hand gently on Arthur's hot brow, "I know your mother, I respect her. I think I can partially comfort her. Will you come and show me where she lives?"

There was a moment of irresolution, then Arthur raised his eyes. Tears stood in those of Mr. Howard as he repeated the question, "will you come?"

"Yes" replied youth, solemnly and deliberately, though with a husky voice, "I shall feel better when she knows all about it. When I was little she used to pray with me after I had done wrong, she will now."

Here a vigorous fit of coughing from the book-keeper blended with the sound of the last words, the sharp thin man thinking in this way to repress a sob. Mr. Howard walked away with Arthur, Mr. West began to write a letter, and everything in the counting room went on as calmly as if an immortal soul had not, a moment before, hovered there on the brink of ruin. So it is, and it is well, for if the walks we tread and the rooms where we sit, could

testify of the guilt and grief they had witnessed, whose heart would not sicken at the recital ?

“ I don’t know what would become of law and justice if everybody thought like you and Mr. Howard,” said Mr. West, proceeding to fold and direct his letter. “ I don’t believe in calling a crime an error, or in handling villainy with gloves.”

“ Neither do I,” was the answer ; “ it is false sympathy which spares the transgressor ; still, I would not deal with a boy of fifteen as with an old offender.”

“ I am sorry to lose Arthur,” said Mr. West, musingly. “ He had the material in him for a capital business man. No blundering over his work, no waiting to be told a second time what I wanted done, but whether I set him to sweep the counting room, carry a check to the bank, or add a column of figures, he was sure to do it quick and well. I wish Felix had his spirit.”

“ Frank has sent for Felix to come back with me,” said the uncle. There is no school next week, and he and May have something planned out for every day.”

"He can't go," replied the father; "I am pressed just now, and I must have him here till I get a boy in Arthur's place."

So the invitation was not mentioned to Felix, who was secretly longing for a visit to the country. He imagined his uncle did not want him, consequently his manner was cold and constrained. When addressed he gave short and indifferent answers, and when challenged to a game of chess he passed out of the room pretending not to hear. Then he walked down the street very sad and miserable, looking alternately from the stars to the houses, and ready to imagine in his foolish pride that human hearts were as cold as the pavements beneath his feet. In this mood he was met by a party of young men who were out, as they said, to kill time. One clapped him on the shoulder, another called him a downright good fellow, a third took his arm with a familiarity quite winning and asked him to join them in the stroll. Felix knew the whole number were scoffers, blasphemers, revilers of all that is good, pure and true; still,

he yielded to the influence and strode away to the haunts of evil.

In the morning his mother accounted for his absence from the breakfast table by the plea of a violent head-ache. Had not his father been pre-occupied by a new speculation, he might have seen that no ordinary headache could have caused her anxiety. As it was, he remarked he hoped the sickness would not keep his son from the warehouse, where his help was needed ; and then he lingered over his coffee to detail his plans for increased gain. He had scarcely left the house for his place of business, when Mrs. West from the head of the stairs called the doctor to come to Felix.

A low moan of distress guided him to the chamber where the youth lay, with his cheeks hot and fevered, his eyes wild and bloodshot, though he closed them when he saw his uncle approach.

"Let me bathe your head and hands," said the latter, proceeding to perform the office. "You look in need of sleep and then I think you will feel better."

Felix submitted, as weak natures always do in the presence of stronger, and gradually becoming more quiet, he soon forgot himself in temporary sleep. When Mrs. West raised her eyes inquiringly to the doctor, the sympathetic look she met confirmed her worst fears. "My first-born is a drunkard," she exclaimed. "I thought I had trouble enough when Ella died, but her death was nothing to this. Don't let his father know it," she entreated. "He would cast him off forever if he thought such a thing possible."

A suppressed sob from the other side of the bed mingled with the mother's excited tone. It was Lucia, with her face bowed upon her hands, and her bright locks falling in careless neglect over her shoulders while she wept for her sinning brother. It was her first real sorrow, and God alone knows the bitterness of that first experience. Wasted perfume can never be gathered up, neither can the fulness of delight return to the heart when once the bitter draught has been held to the lips.

Dr. West had a long conference with his sister while Felix slept. The lady wore a morning robe of silk, knotted at the waist by heavy cord and tassels, and open at its lower circumference thereby revealing embroidery that half her sex would envy. While talking, she listlessly toyed with the tassel, careless that she reduced the tasteful device to a mass of shreds. She spoke of her husband, rich in silver and gold, successful in the opinion of the world, yet poor in the true essentials of happiness, and signally failing in the great object of life. "In one of my rides last summer," she continued, "I passed a little brown house, where a man and woman were sitting at the door with three children, she mending a garment, and he teaching the smallest to read. It was a poor, mean place, yet I stopped to ask for a glass of water, because it did me good to see a man who took an interest in his family. My husband never will as long as his whole heart is set on riches."

Some hours afterward, when Felix awoke

and saw his uncle sitting by his bed, his first impulse was to cover his face with the sheet. The kind words that greeted him made him change his purpose, though had they been burning coals they would have been less painful. "You look better, my dear boy; you needed sleep to calm your throbbing temples;" and with these words the speaker held a cooling draught to the parched lips. After drinking it Felix lay in silence, apparently revolving some painful thought.

"Uncle," he at length whispered. There was no need for him to say more. As he met the mild eyes that looked into his reprovingly, he knew that the cause of his sickness was understood, and he again covered his face.

"Felix," inquired Dr. West, "was yesterday the first time you ever drank brandy?"

"No, uncle, but never so much before. I kept drinking to let the others see I was not afraid."

"Felix," the tone was grave and rebuking, "you are destroying yourself."

“I know it.”

“Then you are doubly blameable, rushing wilfully to ruin, bringing shame and sorrow to your friends, and sinning against your Maker. Felix,” the word was startling in its earnestness, “a young man is capable of becoming the grandest thing this side of heaven ; he can also sink into the most degraded. Which will you be ?”

“I can’t choose now,” returned the youth ; “I am drawn in by evil companions and I cannot escape.”

“You can,” said the uncle with energy. “If you saw a wild beast upon your track you would rush to a place of safety ; so now you have only to exert your power of will to be rescued from a greater danger. At your age, evil habits are bands of flax, by and-by they will harden into chains of iron.”

Felix groaned. “I can’t do better, uncle. I try and fail, then father scolds and after that I don’t care what becomes of me.”

What could Dr. West do ; how strengthen a

spirit so weak, so ready to yield in the first temptation. There was only one source of help, the value of which he had often tested. Kneeling by the bed he committed the sinning boy to the care of a forgiving God. Sighs from another part of the room mingled with the petition. They proceeded from the mother, who, though herself prayerless, desired a blessing for her child.

“If Felix had had praying parents and a Christian home, he would not have been what he is,” she said afterward. “Caleb and I did not lay the right foundation for domestic happiness.”

She was correct. No family can truly prosper where obligation to God is not acknowledged ; no home be in the highest sense a happy one, where duty and accountability are ignored, and selfish pursuits and pleasures made the ruling motive of action.

CHAPTER IX.

SCHEMING.

"There are in this rude, stunning tide,
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide,
Of the everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart,
Through dusty lane and wrangling mart."

CONTRARY to his usual custom after tea, Mr. West threw himself upon the lounge without a look at the newspaper, evidently in the mood for quiet conversation. "Let me see, Edward," he began, "you have four children."

"Yes, four healthy, intelligent, well-disposed children, and I am proud of them," replied the father, one of whose weaknesses, not an uncommon one, by the way, was his parental vanity.

"You ought to be providing for their future."

"I am; Frank is nearly ready for college, May could teach, though her mother chooses to keep her at home till she gains some knowledge of cooking and sewing, Belle and Maurice are regular school children, fresh as roses, and merry as larks. I mean the whole four shall be well educated, and fitted properly to discharge the duties incumbent upon any position in life. Such a training will be worth more than gold or silver."

"It will cost something to carry Frank through college. I recollect you had a severe struggle."

"Yes, it is hard work to keep up with the classes, and at the same time earn the means of paying term bills. I know I was almost discouraged sometimes."

After a short pause, the elder brother resumed, "how do you invest your surplus money? Of course, you more than meet your expenses, year by year?"

“Certainly. I believe it is every man’s duty to save a portion of his earnings, be they ever so small. The little I have is partly invested in the village bank, and partly let out in small sums, to good, reliable men.”

“Just as I thought,” was the answer. “I suppose you get six per cent. interest.”

“Mostly.” He did not add that three hundred dollars were loaned to a young man in college, without interest or security.

“You can do better than that. In fact, Edward, I had half made up my mind to write when you came. I know a chance where you can, perhaps, double the principal within six months, or if you choose to keep it invested, to clear from twelve to twenty per cent. a year. The property is a newly discovered coal mine of uncommon value and productiveness. Brewer, one of my neighbors, bought fifty shares a month ago, and yesterday he sold them for nearly twice the first cost. To-day they were sold again, and the second buyer made over two hundred dollars by the transaction. Tho

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shares will keep working up, up, for when these things take a start, they go with a rush. The mine yields freely, with comparatively little expense, so the profits must be enormous. I bought forty shares to-day, and mean to secure some more to-morrow. How many shall I take for you ? ”

“ Thank you, Caleb, for your interest, but I must decline the offer. I have no money to spare, and if I had, I might decline to use it thus. You know my ideas about speculation.”

“ I do know, and so I never asked you to dip into what we call fancy stocks. I admit
• there are certain liabilities to all these, but this coal mine is a different concern. It can't get wrecked, burnt up, or have a competitor, for there is no other within one hundred miles. You had better take twenty or thirty shares.”

“ No, Caleb, this buying to sell again to-morrow or next week, according to the changes of the market, seems to me only a short remove from gambling. It is certainly a hazard throw, which takes money from the pocket of

one man and transfers it to another, without any reasonable equivalent. You recollect how it proved with father."

"Father did not understand how things were going to turn. He made one move too many and so lost the whole."

"I might do the same. I am old-fashioned enough to prefer six per cent. with reasonable security, to a golden chance of making my fortune within a year. Sudden gains usually waste away as suddenly. I have known people to make money in a lottery or by privateering, yet such money more often proves a curse than a blessing to the possessor, Caleb. God's blessing does not attend such property. His rule is, that as a general thing, people must earn what they have, and this rule always works well."

"You will not make people think so, and perhaps you will change your mind when you have Frank's college bills to pay, together with the increased expenses of the others. Children want more as they grow older, and pa-

rents should think of such things in their business arrangements."

Perhaps the merchant persuaded himself that this was why he applied all his power to the pursuit of gain. Sometimes, however, the thought of higher duties will come unbidden, through the mist of worldliness, and so it came to him on the morning that succeeded this conversation. He sat at the breakfast table, alternately reading the paper and sipping his coffee, with Felix on one side, still pale and feeble.

Suddenly the father looked up from the newspaper. "Felix!" he spoke so earnestly that the youth changed color, "haven't I seen you with Eames and Gunnison, clerks somewhere in our row?"

"Yes," and the blood rushed over the speaker's face in one crimson tide.

"Never go with them again, not one step, as you value your reputation."

"What have they done?" inquired Mrs. West, in alarm.

"Got intoxicated, last night, at some misera-

ble den or other, then staggered into the street to insult decent people. There was a scuffle and knock-down, it seems, when the police interfered. The two young mad men were hurried off to the watch-house, and this morning they will have their examination. The result will be the payment of a fine and costs, the probable loss of their situations, and the attendant disgrace, which is not a small item in the account. Strange that men will make beasts of themselves in this way."

Felix expressed too much by his countenance to escape the notice of his father. "Do you know anything about the affair?" he inquired, with aroused suspicion.

"No, father, I was in bed sick all last evening."

"It is well," returned the parent more calmly. "Felix, those are bad young men, and the more dangerous, because they make a good appearance. Gunnison's employer was speaking of him not more than a week ago, and said he should have to send him away if he did not

become more steady. He is a first rate accountant, but has gone on so lately, that he is not fit for much the first hour or two in the morning. Eames is no better; indeed, they say he led Gunnison astray in the first place, and now the two are leagued together to corrupt others. Both of them drink and gamble, I am told, and when a man does that, there is not much left in the catalogue of crime which he is incapable of doing. Felix, I mention this to warn you against such companions. You had better take poison."

Felix became more and more troubled, as his father proceeded, until at length, complaining of his head-ache, he made his escape up stairs. He did not come down until his uncle was starting on a second expedition to the book-stores, when he volunteered to be his companion.

The walk was taken almost in silence, the youth obstinately repelling all attempts at conversation. Upon their return, when Dr. West took the street leading to his brother's house,

Felix begged to go in a different direction. Accordingly, turning aside from the public routes thronged by carriages and pedestrians, they bent their steps to the most retired streets, where an occasional footfall alone broke the silence.

“Uncle,” whispered Felix, as if afraid of being overheard, “I can’t get clear from them. Father did not know how his words cut me.”

“Clear from whom?” was the surprised rejoinder.

“Eames and Gunnison. They are as bad as father said, and worse too.”

“Then follow your father’s advice, and eschew the acquaintance.”

A deep sigh from the youth followed these words, and by degrees the story came out. It was the story that has been many times repeated, of yielding to temptation, till completely involved in its meshes, not because of the powerful lure, but on account of the cowardly spirit which shrank from open resistance of evil. He had strolled with Eames and Gunnison in

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the street, gone with them to brilliantly lighted saloons, put his lip to the wine-cup, played games of chance for money, and, as a consequence, became involved in debts beyond his ability to pay. "What shall I do?" he asked in conclusion.

"Tell your father the whole truth, ask him for money to pay the debt, and then begin a new life."

"I can't tell father, and if I did, and get free this time, I might do the same thing again," pleaded the poor, weak youth.

"You must tell him, that is the first step, and then make a firm resolve, by God's help, never again to yield."

The conversation was protracted. Felix freely unveiled the history of his past life, with its struggles and its sins, for the last twelve-month, and his uncle as earnestly pointed out his danger and the only remedy.

"There are great temptations here," sighed Felix. "Any where else I could do better."

"No," replied the uncle. "Temptations

are every where, but it is the weak heart that gives them their power."

"What can I do, then," he rejoined. "It is a terrible thing to live in such a world, and sometimes I wish I was out of it."

"My dear boy," said his uncle impressively, "two years ago Frank came to me with the same questions. He was tempted, though in a different way, and when he saw the weakness of his heart, he was afraid."

"What did you tell him?"

"I gave him a verse from the Bible which contains both question and answer, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' Felix, no one is safe who does not trust in a power higher than himself. - I have been young, and I know all about it.' "

Mr. West did not respond to his brother's application for the village Library. "Let those who want books pay for them," he replied. "You and old Dr. Haley have already done public service enough for nothing, without

spending time and money to buy books for people who are too stingy or improvident to pay for them from their own purses."

It was useless to reason with him: the eye dimmed by selfishness sees not beyond the horizon of its own wants and wishes. In the morning Mrs. West placed a sum of money in the doctor's hand as a donation for the library. "It is from Lucia and myself," she said in answer to his look of inquiry. "We were going out yesterday to buy each of us an expensive silk which we do not need. I might not wear my dress twice through the winter, and the books will do more good than the garments. When we come to the old homestead, we may be glad to avail ourselves of the library. We may be poor yet," she added in explanation; "Caleb has such a mania for speculation, that he may venture too far."

The merchant, quite unexpectedly, walked with his brother to the railway station on the day of the latter's departure. "I wish I were going with you, away from this hurry and

bustle," he said, with a weary gasp. "Some times I am tired enough in mind and body to envy Kimball's kitten that frisks about among the boxes and barrels."

Dr. West looked keenly into the face of the speaker. Ah! there was more change than he first perceived. Wrinkles had grown deeper, grey hairs were more thickly sown, and the thin cheeks had become sharper in their outline.

"It has been a hard year," resumed the merchant, interpreting the look, "and I have not come unscathed from the contest. The truth is, Edward, I begin to fail. My eyes get dim and bleared before night and I can't run over an invoice as quick as I could ten years ago. You told me once that I was using up the vital energies too fast. You were right; I shall have to lie by before many years."

"Brother," the tone was one of earnest entreaty, "you are rich enough. Your wife pines for the country, the change may be better for Felix, and the remnant of your life is

too short, for money making to be its only object. Give it up now, and spend the rest of your days as your Creator meant they should be spent."

Caleb West shook his brother's hand, and turned down the street without reply. A few minutes afterward he was in a circle of brokers and stock jobbers, who were discussing the effect which the late European news would have on business. Were his thoughts all with the group? Perhaps so, for he cared not to look beyond.

CHAPTER X.

FELIX.

“ My God I early left, he leaves me now,
And death but works His will to lay me low;
I have no thought to mock his throne with prayer,
Wrung from the coward crouching of despair.”

FOR the next twelve months Dr. West's life glided like a quiet stream. There are some who affect to despise such men because they do no great deeds, work no mighty revolutions, and pass on their way with their names comparatively unknown. Yet think again my reader. Were we to portray the man who most truly fulfils his mission, we should look to him who, with no sigh for a brilliant theatre of action, best fulfils the duties of a humble sphere. So our doctor, as he glided in and out of sick rooms, with a smile upon his lip and a

word of hope or sympathy on his tongue, served his God by doing good to man.

It was a stormy night, with wild gusts shrieking down the chimney and hurling snow-flakes against the window panes, when drunken Pat Leary came for the doctor to go to Michael, sick with lung-fever. Mrs. West thought it was too stormy for her husband to go out, and she told Pat so, with the added remark, that medicine could not do much good in that miserable hovel, where the wind blew out the candle. Frank looked up from his Homer with the determination never to be a doctor, or, if he were, to visit rich patients only, in unpleasant weather. Fortunately for Michael, Dr. West put on his shaggy overcoat and sallied into the storm, without regard to such distinctions. Mrs. West was not in good temper, perhaps the storm affected her nerves ; as she fidgetted about the room, quite disposed to find fault. The lamp smoked, so she blamed the oil ; the fire did not burn freely, consequently the coal was censured ; the yarn she was knitting be-



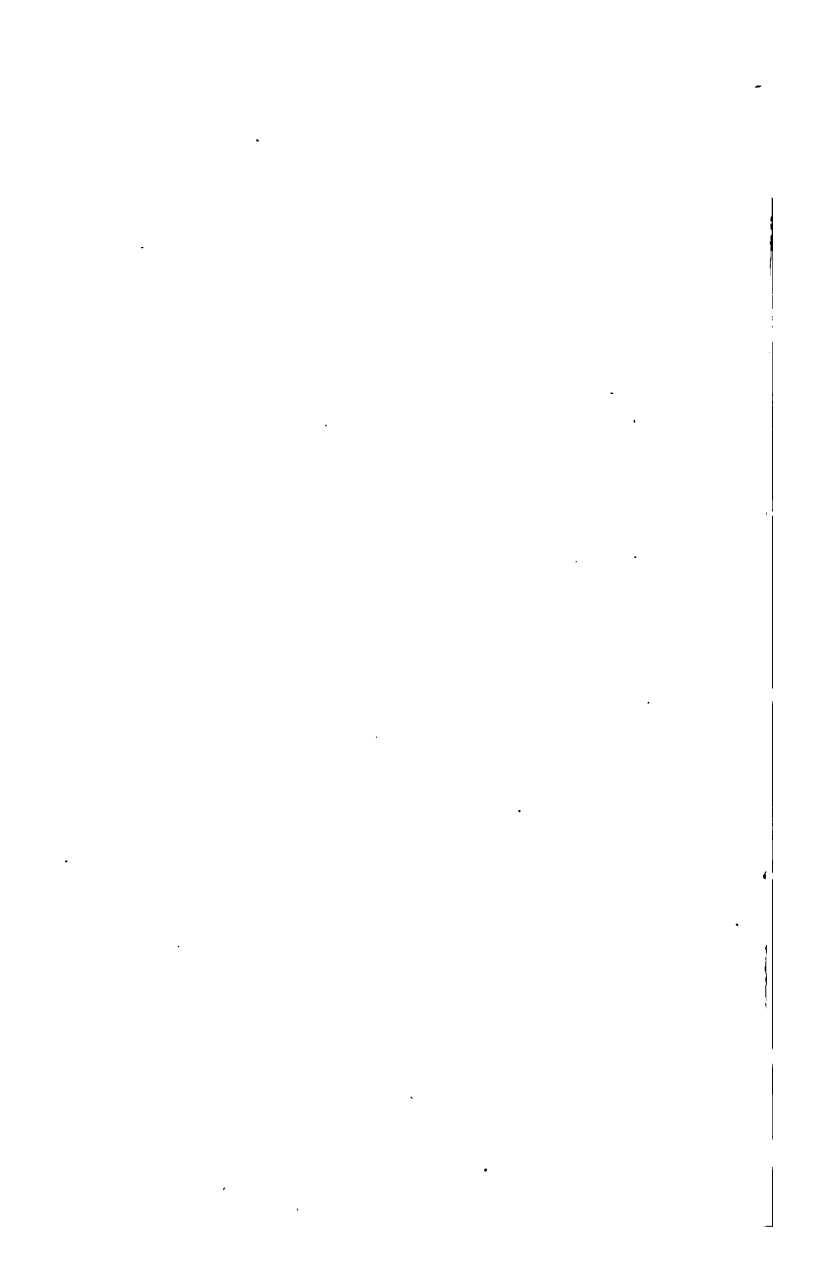
D- West and Nichols p. 113

you'd better say nothing on this subject, served him better than doing good to none.

It was a stormy night, with wild, howling winds, falling down the chimney and hurling snow into the room, and the whirling pines, when a drunken fellow came for the doctor to go to Michael's sick with lunatic fever. Mrs. West thought it was too stormy for her husband to go out, and she told Parsons, with the added remark that no one could do much good in that howling blast, where the wind blew out the candles. Frank looked up at his father, and the fatalistic answer to be a doctor, or, if it were to visit rich people only, he unpleased himself, and ran away for Michael. Dr. West had a heavy overcoat and saddle-bags, and went without regard to such discomforts. Mrs. West was not in good temper, perhaps the storm affected her nerves; as she chattered about the storm, quite disconcerted to find that the doctor was gone, so she blamed the storm, and poor Michael had to be left, consequently the doctor was censured, the yarn she was knitting, and



Dr. West and "Michael"—p 148.



came tangled, and the poor sheep, on whose back it grew, was condemned.

At length the real cause of her vexation burst forth. "I can't think why your father insisted upon studying medicine," she exclaimed to her children. "He might have been a rich merchant like your uncle Caleb, quiet at home by the gas-light, instead of plowing his way through the snow to Pat Leary's shanty."

"I wish father was rich," sighed May, holding her work to the light. May was turning an old merino dress wrong side out, and the sigh was because she could not make it look quite as well as new."

"Dresses are nothing, May," returned Frank, "but if I had a rich father I would go straight through college, without teaching school and planning how to make the ends meet. There are a hundred books I want and can't have. What a happy fellow cousin Felix must be, with as much money as he wants."

"Your uncle's family can take comfort," responded the mother. "They don't know what

winter is in their house, where every closet is warm as summer, and hot and cold water in every chamber. I don't envy your aunt's laces and jewelry, but I should like a furnace."

The return of Dr. West, with hat and coat powdered by snow, ended these utterances of discontent, and Mrs. West felt a pang of self-reproach when she heard how poor Michael suffered from a broken square of glass at the side of his bed, "It is the worst storm of the season," continued the doctor, as he shook off the flakes. "I could scarcely make my way home against the wind."

"You will be called up," replied his wife. "You always are in a hurricane or tornado, and you are always foolish enough to go."

"A short time after retiring, Dr. West was roused from his slumbers by the fancied ringing of the door-bell. Notwithstanding her prediction, Mrs. West did not believe it was the bell, and she strove to persuade him to close his eyes again in forgetfulness of the unwelcome messenger. The sound was heard more

distinctly a second time on account of a temporary lull in the tempest.

"Who is there?" demanded Dr. West, stepping toward the door without opening it.

The response was borne away on the wind, and its tones could not be recognized.

"Who is it?" was again inquired.

"Let me in, quick, I am faint and chilled," was the answer, in a voice which sent a thrill to the heart of the hearer.

The door was thrown open, and a figure covered with sleet and snow pressed over the threshold. "I am nearly frozen," was murmured. "and once I sat down exhausted, but the thought of you helped me on again."

"Felix," exclaimed the doctor, who, without more questions began to remove the icy garments of the guest.

"I knew you would have a welcome for me," faltered the youth, sinking into a chair. "The best people have the most charity."

"Don't try to talk now," said Dr. West, quietly. "You need rest to-night, and you can tell me your story to-morrow."

With a languid smile Felix leaned back in the chair, too much exhausted even to second the efforts for the promotion of his comfort; when his coat was changed, he suffered his arms to be put into the dry garment with the passiveness of a child who has no wish or thought of his own. So when his uncle chafed his limbs, he submitted to the act without moving his hands or feet from the position in which they lay. After an hour passed in this manner, he recovered sufficiently to go up stairs, where his aunt had already prepared a warm room with all needed appliances. The kind woman never thought of the cold while she kindled the fire, and gathered pillows and blankets to select the softest and warmest for the sufferer. Felix almost deemed her a good angel when she tucked him up in bed, and then, bending over him, imprinted a motherly kiss upon his throbbing temples.

Violent storms are often succeeded by a perfect hush in the elements; so it was on the following morning. The wintry sky, unclouded in

its brightness, bent over the white-robed earth, and from spray and twig hung brilliants flashing like gems in the sun-light. Dr. West stood at the window with his eyes fixed on the scene, and querying whether the storms that sweep over the mental atmosphere can be the prelude to as bright a dawn. Reason and imagination both said no, that the stricken spirit must be always stricken, the crushed heart always crushed, but Christian faith, stronger than either, spoke of strength born from suffering, of new graces rising from the ruin of dead hopes.

“Uncle,” the voice came from the bed.

The heart most in communion with God beats quickest at the call of man, and Dr. West never stopped to speculate when duties were to be performed. “You look better, Felix,” he said cheerily. “Quiet sleep has done wonders, and some of your aunt’s breakfast will help the cure.”

“If it were only weariness,” murmured the youth, turning uneasily in the bed.

"We will talk after you have eaten. You must lie still while I bring your food."

Dr. West put down the east curtain where the sun shone in, brought water and napkins that had a smell of rose-leaves, then robed Felix in his own dressing-gown and propped him up by pillows, and placed a waiter with a cup of fragrant coffee and a plate of toast on a small round table by the bed. Felix viewed all this preparation with a throbbing heart, and when he began to eat there was a strange sensation in his throat that kept him from swallowing.

"Uncle," he whispered, "do you know why I am here?"

"No, my dear boy, I only know that you are in trouble, and I will help you out if I can."

A moment before Felix had thought no one could help him with his heavy burden, and he had pushed away the toast, scarcely caring whether he ever ate again. It looked different now; he might yet retrieve the errors of the past; at any rate he could try, and with his uncle's great loving heart to help him he could

not utterly fail. Thus he mused, and by the time he finished his breakfast, a feeling of hope succeeded to the dull pressure of despair.

“Now you may tell me,” said Dr. West, when he had pushed away the round table, and seated himself by the bed with the hand of his nephew in his clasp. You need not fear to open your whole heart. My profession has made me a confidant of many tales of guilt and sorrow, deeper far, I am persuaded, than yours.”

Felix lay still a moment, querying how his uncle, so pure and conscientious in his own heart and life, could be thus charitable with the sinning. There is but one way of solving the enigma ; the Holy God is merciful to his erring creatures, and, in proportion as his image is transcribed upon any human heart, will that heart be forbearing with others.

“Uncle,” began Felix, with a spasmodic effort, “I promised you to give up drinking and gambling. I haven’t kept my word.”

“I knew it,” was the answer, “I knew it by

your looks. Oh, Felix, vice brands itself on the features."

"I meant to do it," pleaded the youth, but I was afraid to tell father about my debt, and when I mentioned it to Gunnison, he said he would give me a chance to win back the money. I resolved if I could gain enough to pay him, to give up cards, wine, and bad companions, all at once, but every time I played I became more in debt, until at last I knew I owed him so much that I could never pay him. Then he began to call for money, and threatened to expose me if I did not get him a vacant situation in our warehouse. Father would not have him, and the bad fellow followed me round with taunts and threats, till I was afraid to lift up my eyes lest I should see him at my heels. Day before yesterday he came into the counting-room, and, in his provoking way, asked father to pay my debts."

"What then?" inquired Dr. West, Felix having stopped here.

"I don't quite know ; father paid him, I be-

lieve ; I saw him count money. I don't remember just what father said, but he told me there was no longer any place for me at home. Uncle, that night I walked up and down the side-walk in front of our house, without daring to go in, and several times I saw mother press her face against the window panes, looking, I suppose, for me. Afterward I went to a saloon, where I drank brandy, for the sake of banishing my trouble. It set my brain on fire ; I thought I was going crazy, and I rushed toward the river, meaning to throw myself in. The water flowed along dark and cold, and just as I was about to take the fatal plunge, something made me think of God and eternity. I dared not leap in then ; I was afraid of what might be beyond."

"God saved you from self-destruction, Felix, saved you, I hope, for repentance and usefulness," said the doctor.

"Uncle, do you recollect you prayed by my bed the last time you were in the city ? The memory of that prayer encouraged me to come

to you. I did not have money enough to pay the whole fare, so I walked the last five miles in that terrible storm. I could not have struggled much farther ; I believe I spit blood several times."

Dr. West was not one of those mistaken philanthropists who palliate transgression by overmuch charity, and he now strove to convince Felix that his present wretchedness was the result of his own misdeeds. The next step was to induce the youth to write his father a full confession of his past course, with an humble entreaty for pardon. Felix at first thought he would forfeit his uncle's kind offices in his behalf, rather than submit to this last condition ; but his perverseness was soon overcome, and before he had written one page, the sheet was blotted by tears. "I know I have been a wayward son," he said in conclusion ; "father, will you forgive me ?"

A reply soon came, as cold and business-like as the writer, containing permission for the prodigal to return on promise of future obedi-

ence. "Felix must earn the right to be trusted," wrote the father. "When he proves himself reliable, then, I am willing to overlook the past. His mother thinks he had better stay with you for the present, as she imagines he has not been well for the last three months."

It was as much as Felix expected, though far from satisfying his heart. "It is like my father," he said to Frank. "He never quite forgives anybody."

"Mine always does," was the answer. "After a wrong is once confessed, he never thinks of it again."

Contrary to Dr. West's expectation, Felix did not recover his wonted strength. Whether his excesses had debilitated his system, or the struggle in the terrible storm had caused some inward strain, it soon became evident that he was incapable of much exertion. He and Frank went out to skate, but while Frank shot across the pond with the speed of an arrow, Felix was obliged to stop before he crossed it

once. So it was when May challenged him to a walk. In her delight to be out in the bracing air, the merry girl quite outstripped her cousin, and on looking back with a laughing reproach for his tardiness, she saw him leaning against the fence for support.

“It is a good time for me to think,” he said, as he lay wearily upon the sofa. “I believe I never really considered what I was made for till I came here. I took it for granted, that I must get all the pleasure out of life I could; but such things as usefulness and improvement were left out of the account.”

“Did you ever think of your Creator?” inquired his uncle.

“Only to wish I could hide from His sight. It was terrible to think that His eye was on me always.”

With the lapse of another week the invalid visibly declined. True, the color deepened on his cheek, and the light in his eye, but so do the hues of the forest ere the leaves fall. He walked about the house with a quick step, oft-

en approaching to a bound, when Frank and May were in sight, still he could not control the hurried breathing which revealed his fatigue. He attempted to sketch the view from his uncle's study, with the village street, that stretched away in dim perspective, and the mountain in the background, bleak and bare against the wintry sky. Often as he leaned his head on his hand when alone, he never did it when May was by, and so she praised the great elm, whose scarred, seamed trunk stood out in bold relief, without a suspicion of the effort it had cost. His uncle, who saw more clearly, took away the drawing, when the hand that held the pencil trembled, and the cheek of the artist flushed.

Felix looked up with a sigh. "All my dreams are fading. I meant to win a name as a painter, but I shall never sketch another scene."

The words were prophetic. In a few days he was not able to go down stairs, on account of his increased prostration. "It is better to

have it so," he said, when his uncle gave him a strengthening mixture. "If I had been well enough to go home, I might have got into bad company again. I shall have less to answer for now than if I had lived longer."

"You might become a blessing to the world," responded his uncle. "There is much need of earnest men laboring for the right."

"I could not be one," he said bitterly. "If my father had been different, I should not have turned out such a miserable wreck. He was ready enough to blame me for doing wrong, but he never encouraged me to do right. He was too busy making money to mind much about his family."

It is sad to see a young life go out in gloom, to watch the footsteps in their sure approach to the dark river, with no ray streaming across the waters from the farther shore. Felix knew his strength wasted, yet he contemplated the fact with gloomy apathy. "There is nothing to live for," he said once, "no pleasure worth enjoying. I have tried it and I ought to know."

When I used to laugh and shout with the rest, over wine and cards, a stranger might have thought I was happy, but I have sung many a time when I felt more like crying. Maurice," he said to his youngest cousin, a lad of ten, "never play truant, shun a bad boy as you would a serpent; read the Bible every day, do just as your father tells you, don't smoke, or chew, or swear, for the sake of being thought a man, and you will escape what has been the death of poor Felix."

Perhaps the attempt to benefit another, softened his own heart, as after speaking, his cheeks were wet with tears, the first he had shed. His uncle, who hailed those tears with joy, sought to lead him to those simple yet sublime truths which are rest to the weary, comfort to the stricken, safety to the lost. Felix heard in the same way he would have taken a nauseous drug, had his uncle offered it, with evident relief when the speaker ceased. "It is no use," he murmured, when his mother bent over him in anguish, beseeching him to turn his

thoughts heavenward. "When my uncle talked and prayed with me in my chamber more than a year ago, I saw two paths open, one leading up, up, and the other down, down. I took the downward one, with my eyes open, and now I must abide by my choice."

The most affecting phase of Felix's sickness, next to his religious unconcern, was his indifference to his father. The merchant brought choice fruits and rare delicacies to tempt the appetite of his dying child, yet the latter never smiled at his coming, and sometimes, instead of extending his hand in welcome, he turned away from the face of his guest. Only once did he manifest a desire for an interview. Mr. West was expected on Saturday night, and Felix begged that he might be sent to him immediately after his arrival. The train was delayed an hour beyond the usual time, and the sick youth became restless, and started whenever he heard the door open. At length when the father arrived, cold, tired and hungry, upon hearing the request, he proceeded directly to

his son. What passed in that protracted conference, did not transpire ; but Mr. West returned down stairs, disturbed and irritated, and inquired of Frank how long it had been since Felix had shown signs of a wandering intellect.

“ I don’t love my father,” Felix replied to a gentle reproof from his mother. “ He never did anything to bind me to him, when I was well, and all he does now is to bring me things I don’t want. One of uncle’s kind looks warms my heart more than a cart-load of grapes and oranges.”

The time came when the invalid was insensible to sympathy. A gradual torpor crept over him, so that he noticed external objects less and less, perhaps that his spirit might more uninterruptedly contemplate his change. None knew what passed between him and his Maker during those last hours. Bended knees were around him, praying lips sent up their petitions, and the Saviour can reveal his love when the dim eyes take no cognizance of earthly affection, yet it is at best, a trembling hope which

clings to reeds like these. A feeble pressure of the hand to anxious inquiry, a faint amen to a prayer for trust and light, and a sudden raising of the eyelids at the whispered name of Jesus, were all he left to comfort burdened hearts.

CHAPTER XL.

SHADOWS.

"In vain through every changing year,
Did nature lead him as before,
A primrose by a river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

WHATEVER might have been Caleb West's emotion at the death of his first-born, he followed him to the grave with a tearless eye. In the burying-place the coffin was opened for one more look of the pale face, ere it was forever shut out from the brightness and beauty of the living world. Strangers bent over the young sleeper in tears, but the father stood by with folded arms, and a cold gaze, which repelled every expression of sympathy. Afterward he returned to his brother's house, made his preparations for depar-

ture, and took the last train for the city, that he might be in season for business at an early hour on the morrow.

In three weeks he came back for his wife. His brow was anxious, his manner abstracted, and when he proposed a walk to his brother, the latter naturally turned toward the cemetery. "Not there; the dead are gone forever, and there is no satisfaction in standing by their graves. Our business is with the living, and the breathing world where we dwell." With these words, he led the way toward the old homestead. Perhaps the spot never looked more attractive than now, seen in the soft light of the spring afternoon. It is certain the worldly man paused to take in the quiet beauty of the scene. The elms with their spreading branches, the sunshine on the grass, the house with its look of comfort, the fruit-trees, on one side, with their burden of bloom, all presented a picture exceedingly pleasant to the eye long sated with brick and mortar.

"I shall have to wait another year, Edward,

before I take possession of the old place," he said abruptly. "I have lost money within six months."

"You can afford to lose a large sum, and still have enough left to live in luxury," replied his brother. "With a fraction of your wealth you would be counted a rich man in the village."

"My loss is just about what I calculated to expend here," was the answer, "and I must make it up in some way, before I shall feel like giving up business. That unlucky coal mine! I wish I had kept clear of the dirty speculation."

A little inquiry elicited the whole story. The original proprietors of the coal mine had exaggerated its value, to dispose of their property, and by a series of misrepresentations had succeeded in their object. In consequence of their highly-wrought statements, the stock rose each day to a higher figure, until fortunes were speedily made by its purchase and transfer. At the time of its greatest inflation, Mr.

West bought largely, partly for himself, and partly for an acquaintance, who sought to reap a golden harvest. Plants of mushroom growth are seldom long lived, and so it proved with the coal-mine. Confidence in its worth soon began to wane; the expense of working proved great, and the product of inferior quality, and as it had risen in favor, so rapidly it declined. Mr. West's friend declined to take his portion, consequently the merchant was left with a burden of unsaleable property, whose ownership involved him in expense.

"We are trying to work it," continued Mr. West, "but it costs more than it comes to, and every day's labor runs the company into debt. Besides there are two or three law-suits that may not be settled these five years, which will eat up the whole. If I had put my money here," he continued, with a yearning look at the fair scene in prospect, "I should have had something to show for it now."

Old Dr. Haley rode by during the conversation between the brothers. He was in a hand-

some carriage with shining harness, and a horse, whose finely arched neck, agile step, and symmetrical limbs, were the admiration of the village. Dr. Haley was a humble Christian, still he was human, and as he had never before owned a horse and carriage, he must be forgiven if a little pride mingled with the pleasure he felt in his new acquisition. He saluted the two men, made a remark on the loveliness of the afternoon, which tempted him to ride, and reaching forward in the carriage, patted his sleek steed with affectionate delight.

“It is a noble animal,” he replied, to a commendatory remark from Dr. West, “and I never thought to own such a one. But God has been better to me than my hopes, and when my old limbs began to fail, he put it into the heart of my people to make me the very present I needed above all others.”

“So Dr. Haley has got his horse and carriage,” remarked the merchant, when the vehicle went on. “I really meant to do something about it, but I thought there would be

time enough when I came here to live. Three or four shares in that smutty coal-mine would have covered the whole cost."

"Money bestowed in charity is well invested," was the answer. "I believe every man contributed towards this gift feels better pleased when he sees Dr. Haley ride than if he had spent six times the amount on himself."

The doctor did, assuredly ; not rich enough to give away money without the exercise of self-denial, he had appropriated the ten dollars to Dr. Haley which was designed for the purchase of a valuable medical work.

"I never did much for charitable objects," resumed the merchant, "perhaps not as much as I ought, but if I do more by-and-by it makes no difference in the long run."

"Is it not better to let each day perform its own duty?" inquired Dr. West. "Old Major Humphrey would not give his wife's fatherless nephews and neices a penny, because he said he was saving his money to found an orphan asylum at his death, but when he died, his

relatives disputed his will, and the whole estate was frittered away in law-suits."

"There is no danger that I shall do so," was the reply. "As soon as I settle down here I shall carry out my plans in earnest; and by the way, I mean to donate a handsome sum to your library."

When Mr. West acquainted his wife with the postponement of his plans concerning the homestead, she decidedly expressed her preferences. "I am willing to live in the house as it is now, if there is no money to spend for its improvement," she said. "With some rose-bushes trained over the pillars and a rustic arbor where I can sit with my sewing, I shall be content. May will give me some flower-seeds and help plant them, and when the children begin to dig in the garden they will not have the pale cheeks that trouble me now."

When Mr. West sternly adhered to his resolution, she spoke of George, their only remaining son, whom she wished to withdraw from the influence of those temptations which had brought Felix to a premature grave.

“You must not let him run in the street as you did Felix,” returned the husband, as if the lad could go to school, and yet be kept in the house always! “The pale cheeks of the girls are nothing unusual,” he added. “You are always anxious, you were about Ella. We are only putting off the change a year longer.”

Mrs. West did not immediately reply. She knew her husband's losses were small in comparison with his great wealth, and for his sake not less than her own, she wished to draw him from the charmed circle of business. As she daily saw him become more sordid in his views, more daring in his speculations, she feared lest in his too eager pursuit of riches he might involve his whole property in irretrievable ruin.

“I consent on only one condition,” she then said. “The homestead was to be mine, revertible only to the children. Let the same amount be placed in my name with the same stipulations.”

“Twice as much if you wish, he returned,

proudly. "Caleb West is good yet for a pretty large sum."

Towards sunset Mrs. West went to the graves of her children. She looked upon that of Ella hopefully: had not the Saviour said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven?" Bitter tears fell on the turf that covered Felix: had he not walked in the way of his heart and the sight of his eyes, and was it not written that "for all these things God would bring him into judgment?" Bowed upon this recent mound the stricken mother wrestled with her agony. Long ago, One made in the likeness of man fell on his face and prayed until He sweat great drops of blood, from which comes healing to every form of mortal anguish. It came to her bending above her dead, and she arose to say, "Not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done."

While this scene was transpiring in the church-yard, Mr. West detailed to his brother another pecuniary loss. "You recollect the house lots near the line of the Quintly Rail-

road, which promised to do so well," he remarked. "After all my expense in laying them out, they don't sell, and I should be glad to dispose of the whole for what I paid in the first place." From this narration Mr. West proceeded to speak of his present schemes. "I have sent out a vessel to the West Indies within a week, from which I expect enormous profits. The cargo is in great demand and costs but little here, so I depend upon this to help out my other losses. Captain Plympton understands his business, and if there is money to be made, he will find the way."

"Captain Plympton," repeated the doctor; "poor Felix told me that the first time he ever swore was after hearing one of Captain Plympton's oaths."

"He does swear," replied the merchant, "and sometimes when I have been on board the ship, I have shuddered to hear him talk to the men. A boy who sails with him is almost certain to be ruined, soul and body both."

"I never employ a profane man to hoe my

corn-field," replied the doctor. "I could not trust him."

"Perhaps not. Mr. Howard dismissed his book-keeper, the smartest accountant in the street, because he was an incorrigible swearer, but I can't afford to be so particular. I want to know whether a man understands the management of a ship, not what his views are on some abstract moral question. Captain Plympton makes short voyages and profitable ones, and if he helps me retire from business with a handsome competence, I am content to let him do as he pleases about personal matters."

"You will think differently hereafter," said Mrs. West, who had now returned. "I wish a competent person would write a book respecting the duties of employers to the employed. I don't mean simply the relation of mistress to cook, or master to chore boy, but of business men through the various grades of servitors, from the book-keeper, who writes confidential letters, to the dray-man who teams goods. I think a man like Mr. Howard, who is actively

interested in the temporal and spiritual welfare of these various classes, and is particular about the good morals of all in his service, is one of the best agents for improving the world."

"No doubt of it," was the answer, "but who has time to do all this? I certainly have not. When I get out here in the homestead I mean to be more particular about such things."

With this plea he excused himself, and crowded into the uncertain future the burden of present duties and obligations. Mr. West is the type of a class who, absorbed in business or pleasure, defer the real work of life till the season of labor is over.

CHAPTER XII.

DARKNESS.

IN the winter after the death of Felix, we resume the broken thread of our narrative. Frank was in College, Dr. West's patients had been more than usually mindful of his claims, so that he afforded May a costly dress, his wife a furnace, and himself the medical book that he relinquished for the sake of Dr. Haley. Do you suppose Mrs. West ever complained of her situation? Not often. She knew her lot was more blessed than that of most women, and when expressions of discontent were ready to burst from her lips, she contrasted her husband with his rich brother, and thanked God. Notwithstanding this peace in one family, the season was fraught with much pecuniary embarrassment. For some time previous many

kinds of property had been unduly inflated, speculators bought and sold with fearful recklessness, and men without waiting for gradual gains, sought to make fortunes in a day. A re-action naturally came, and rumors were abroad of distress in commercial circles, the stoppage of manufactories, and the occasional failure of some mercantile house. Later still the panic increased, until the business world was paralyzed by fear. The anxiety at first felt mostly in large places extended over the community until men trembled in view of what the morrow might bring.

During this interval no intelligence was received from Caleb West. The doctor, who carefully scanned the city papers, always felt relieved after he found his brother's name was not among the list of failures; still, he was too well acquainted with the real wealth of the latter to have much solicitude on his account. "Caleb was one of the solid men, his notes were as good as gold, and his name was known over half the country," he said, in the endeavor

to assure himself that there was no occasion of fear.

At length a message was received from Mrs. West that urged his immediate presence. Her husband was sick, she wrote, worn down by the pressure of care, which had increased daily for the last month, until body and mind both yielded. "You can do us good, come;" such were the concluding words. The letter reached the village at noon; within an hour Dr. West was on his way in response. His wife, who had formerly opposed him, now hastened his departure, charging herself with a message to Dr. Hooker, and taking directions to a man with a broken arm, a lady with a scalded hand and a sick girl, to whom kind words were more than medicine.

Though it was twilight when Dr. West reached his destination, the gathering darkness did not conceal the groups of men who were talking earnestly at the corners of streets or in front of public buildings. Everywhere the topic was the prostration of business, coupled

with speculations upon real or prospective failures, and once the doctor thought he heard his brother's name, though in what connection he could not tell. Before he arrived at the house his steps had nearly quickened to a run, and his heart beat with corresponding quickness.

The calm face of his sister, who met him in the hall, dispelled his fears, especially as she assured him his brother seemed better, both in mind and body. "He is sleeping," she added, and what is rare, his slumbers are peaceful like those of a child. His dreams lately have been full of business plans, and he has talked in a broken way about losses and reverses. It is a terrible ordeal for a man whose whole energies have been spent in acquiring property, to see disaster and perhaps ruin threaten him on every hand."

"Is he in danger, then," was the inquiry.

"Not of failure, I trust, though the losses he has met almost frighten him."

Although Dr. West was prepared to find his brother feeble, he did not think to see him

wasted almost to a skeleton, and unable to speak except in a whisper. He was lying on a lounge in his chamber, with his hand listlessly grasping the evening paper, which he vainly endeavored to read. "The time has come you foretold," he murmured, with a bitter smile. "I am used up, and am likely to keep so. "It is a hard fate," he continued, "to work for years and get a little property together, and then see it melt away like snow."

In vain his brother strove to divert his thoughts from the one engrossing topic. Stocks, ships, and real estate, with their many contingencies, the mention of which was enough to make a man like the doctor, unpracticed in business, tremble, formed the burden of conversation. "If I had given up two years ago," he sighed, "at the time you urged me to take a deed of the homestead, I should have been worth upwards of two hundred thousand dollars, now I doubt if I have more than half that. That coal-mine was the beginning of my bad fortune, and since that, wind and wave, fire and flood, have been in league against me."

"Take heart, brother," said the doctor cheerfully; "with a hundred thousand you will be quite a nabob in the old place. I haven't more than a tenth of it, yet sometimes I call myself a rich man."

The morning came, however, to bring further disclosures. After a vain attempt to dress himself for the counting-room, the merchant received his book-keeper in his chamber. "What news, Kimball," was his anxious inquiry, as soon as the latter crossed the threshold.

"Nothing good," was the reply, "in fact things look dark. They say the Quintly Company is flat."

The merchant's brow contracted in sudden pain. "Have you heard from Brewer?"

"Yes," and the book-keeper became silent.

"What does he say?" Though the question was simple, the answer was awaited in almost breathless silence.

"I wish I could keep it from you, but the truth is, he stopped payment three days ago."

A silence followed this communication. Mr. West took his gold watch from his pocket, looked at it, mechanically wound it, and returned it to its place. "What notes fall due to-day, Kimball?" the voice of the speaker was husky.

The book-keeper answered with the practiced air of one who understands his business.

"You can do it."

"Yes, there is just enough. There would not have been if Mr. Howard had not handed in a check for a sale he made on your account."

Mr. West now leaned back on the lounge, flushed and exhausted, and after, taking notes of sundry matters which required immediate attention, the book-keeper withdrew. An hour of prostration on the part of the merchant followed this interview. He lay with his head thrown back, passive and inert, unwilling to rouse himself enough to swallow the stimulants his brother held to his lips.

"Edward," he said when he revived, "I must talk over matters with you. Don't say no ;

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I tell you I must, or my brain will burst with the pressure there is inside."

"Speak, then," was the soothing reply ; "only be chary of your words, out of pity to your poor weak head," and he bathed it as gently as a mother bathes the brow of her sick child.

"Edward," he gasped, "I am almost a ruined man. Two more failures like that of Brewer and the Quintly Company would finish me. I have been a fool to dabble so in speculation. I might have let well enough alone, and not rushed along blindfold because, forsooth, I might stumble into a gold mine." These words were spoken in an excited tone. I have only one hope left," he resumed more calmly. "A heavy payment becomes due on that coal-mine in the course of a day or two. I ought to hear from a Western firm that are greatly in my debt, and if they come up to the mark, I think I shall be safe till this storm passes. If not; how I shall get through the week I cannot tell."

He paused again exhausted, and during the hour of sleep that followed, Mrs. West detailed a portion of his losses for the last twelve-month. The vaunted house lots still remained on his hands a drug in the market. Captain Plympton's West India voyage had not paid its expenses, several of his largest debtors had become bankrupts, and besides these were minor casualties, such as a freshet that damaged merchandise, a fire that swept over a tract of woodland, and a heavy insurance lost on account of a defect in the policy. "He has borne all so far," she said in conclusion, "but I fear an added misfortune would be like the last straw that broke the camel's back."

"Not quite as bad, I trust," was the reply.

"I should rejoice in the loss of property," she interposed, "if it wins Caleb from his infatuation. Perhaps God takes this way to show him there are treasures more valuable than gold. Felix might have been trained for a life of usefulness and virtue, if his father had not been engrossed in the love of gain. I trem-

ble now for George, when I think of the temptations to which he must be exposed, as the only son of a rich man, in a great city like this. I have scarcely faith enough to trust him in the hands of his heavenly Father."

"We must leave our children there, my sister," responded the doctor. "Sometimes I have longed to put my arms around my own to shield them thus from sin and sorrow, but when I have thought that God's love is better than mine, and His wisdom is infinite, then I have rejoiced that He, not I, is to mark out their path."

In accordance with Mr. West's wish when he awoke, his brother went to the counting-room, where he spent most of the day with Kimball, examining the state of affairs. The result was worse than he feared; heavy notes were falling due, with little available property for their liquidation, for, at this time of general pressure, there were more sellers than purchasers.

"Mr. West has undertaken too much," said

the book-keeper. "He got mixed up with unprincipled men, because he didn't have time to look thoroughly into things. My mother used to say a cook who had many dishes over the fire, would let some of them burn, and it is my idea that the same rule applies to merchants."

During the day, when an errand took Dr. West into Mr. Howard's store, an intelligent youth with a countenance that recalled old memories, ushered him into the counting-room. After accomplishing the object for which he came, he alluded to the youth. "I have seen him before, I think."

"Perhaps you recollect Arthur Temple, who was in your brother's service for a time," observed Mr. Howard. "He has been with me ever since he left his first place, becoming more useful and reliable every day."

This narration was followed by a detail of Arthur's recent history. When Mr. Howard took him to his mother, at the time of his detection, moved by his apparent penitence, and wishing to give him an opportunity to retrieve

his character, the gentleman volunteered to receive him as an errand boy. Arthur gladly accepted, and though at first sullen under the supposition he was watched, as soon as he found he was really trusted, he endeavored to prove himself worthy of confidence. Mr. Howard manifested a fatherly interest in his welfare, the result of which was that the youth repaid in a ten-fold degree, every act of kindness.

“Boys at his age have a claim upon older people which they do not always receive,” observed Mr. Howard. “I believe many valuable minds are lost to the community for want of a little sympathy in boyhood. I was left an orphan, and a good man, now a saint in heaven, sometimes gave me a few words of encouragement, when I was tempted to think no one in the world cared whether I went to ruin or not. I owe to him, under God, whatever of good has been in my life, and for his sake I determined never to pass by a poor, fatherless boy, without an attempt to help him on.”

“Most men have too much business of their own to be concerned for another,” responded the doctor.

“They ought not,” answered Mr. Howard. “It is one of my principles that a man has no right to burden himself with so many cares that he cannot discharge his duty as a social being. When I feel that my personal matters encroach on the time I owe to God and my fellows, I know I ought to relinquish a portion. No one is made to live wholly for himself.”

Do you ask whether there are men like Mr. Howard, who, involved in business, still find time for their Creator and his creatures? Yes, I have known such, and the atmosphere seemed purer where they trod, so pervaded was it by the breath of faith and love.

The next day Kimball came to his employer with the letters received by the morning mail. Two or three were glanced over carelessly, their contents being unimportant, but Mr. West broke the seal of the last with nervous impatience. Before he had read many lines

his countenance changed and the sheet fell from his grasp. "My last hope is gone," he faltered, sinking back on the pillow, "Rugg and Newton have made an assignment of their property. Kimball," he resumed with strange energy, "will you ask Mr. Howard to step up here?"

Mr. Howard came; he always responded to the call of need, and a few words were sufficient to make him understand the position of affairs. Probably he understood it all before, as a man's circumstances are often more clearly seen by his neighbors than himself. Mr. Howard spoke in a calm tone, which enabled the harassed man to feel that his interests were in good hands.

The reception of that letter was the last drop in Mr. West's cup of bitterness; before night he lay on his bed helpless and unconscious. Sad to relate, there are men who will take advantage of another's impotence to accomplish their selfish purposes, and some who had been connected in business with Mr. West were of

this number. Captain Plympton, unscrupulous, so that he might get gain, seized the cargo in his keeping, whether for real or pretended claims could not then be proved. Other losses followed, other demands came in, accumulating in magnitude, until it became evident both to Dr. West and Mr. Howard, that the large property in its present depreciation, could not cover the whole. Ships, stocks, stores, wharves, lands, won by years of incessant toil, at the sacrifice of ease, enjoyment, and higher duties, all must go.

"Let it be so," said the broken merchant, when he partially came to himself. "Caleb West may part with his last dollar, but not with his integrity."

Ah! he did not know himself, for though pride may sustain a man to a certain limit, there its power ceases and the heart is weaker than before. So when Mr. West found himself in reality stripped of his wealth, the pulse of manhood seemed to stop its beating, and the spirit of childhood to return. He now re-

mained in his bed without an effort to rise, indifferent with regard to his business, yet exacting in his requirements of personal service.

"A brother is born for adversity." Dr. West alternated from the sick chamber to the warehouse, indefatigable in the duties that pertain to each.

"My mother used to say we must learn something from the mistakes of other people. I hope I shall from Mr. West," observed Kimball, who was busy with a package of papers.

"What special lesson now?" inquired the doctor, who had conceived a sentiment of respect for the practical good sense of the book-keeper.

"Not to deal with men of Captain Plympton's stamp, who boast how smart they are for trade, and what a knack they have of trading off unsaleable goods. No, sir," he continued, bringing down his pen with force enough to break off the point, "If they do such things they'll cheat you, too, and you'd better give them pretty wide sea-room. To my mind,

Mr. West would have been better off this minute if he had never seen the old salt."

That Kimball had ground for his suspicion was proved during the investigation, yet so deftly had the Captain contrived and executed his scheme that he escaped the strong arm of the law. Mr. West was content to have it thus, so completely was he prostrated by the change of fortune. Indeed, there were times when an overdone steak affected him more sensibly than the knowledge of his failure; a sad lesson for those who heap up riches in forgetfulness that they may take to themselves wings.

Adversity proves the value of some friends as well as the worthlessness of others. Mr. Taggart, the iron manufacturer, sought his old schoolfellow in his reverses, with such a gush of cheerfulness in his greeting, that the merchant smiled for the first time within many days. Kind words cost nothing, but Mr. Taggart's sympathy bore more tangible fruit. He had come with an easy carriage, amply provid-

ed with cushions, pillows, and blankets, in which to convey Mr. West to Cheshire. The thought was timely, as creditors had become clamorous, and an auction was to be held in the sumptuous apartments of the no longer rich man.

“I want to keep you till you can lift the heavy hammers that some of my men use,” said Mr. Taggart. “You will feel like a new man when you get out where the birds wake you up every morning with their songs. The loss of your property will prove a blessing if it drives you out of the counting-room where you were growing old before your time, for the want of fresh air.”

Did it prove so? We shall see.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHANGES.

“ Full many a light thought man may cherish,
Full many an idle deed may do;
Yet not a deed or thought shall perish,
Not one but he shall bless or rue.
And thou may’st seem to leave behind thee,
All memory of the sinful past,
Yet, oh! be sure thy sins shall find thee,
And thou shalt know its fruit at last”

THE breaking up of a home is always fraught with sadness, even though it be a change for the better. There are nooks that have grown dear, niches sacred to tears and prayers, rooms hallowed by sweet domestic joys, chambers haunted by memories of the dead, and from all these it is hard to part. Thus mused Mrs. West, as she went over her house, soon to be thrown open as a place of sale to strangers. While she stood in her front

parlor where she had received guests mid bronze, rose-wood and marble, with her gaze alternately fixed on vases, statuettes and pictures, it would be folly to assert that her heart felt no pang.

"You can take what you like," said Dr. West, kindly; "the creditors have agreed that the furniture be subject to your control."

"I do not wish for any from this room," she replied. "It would ill befit a poor man's house to put in such carpets and furniture. Were it not for your offer of the homestead we should be without a shelter."

"You can have it as long as you wish," he responded, "and you can live there in comfort, for a time, even if Caleb should not soon rally."

"It will be a help," she sighed, "but, Edward, I have spent more upon a single party than we shall save from the wreck. For myself I do not care, but what is to become of the children? how are they to be educated?"

"God provides for the sparrows," was the

answer. "He will not do less for his young immortals. The way for you, sister Catharine, is to take what he gives you to-day without undue thought for the morrow."

Yet the poor woman, despite her Christian faith, had not learned to trust God wholly. She longed to take the burden into her own hands, and herself provide for her young children and invalid husband."

From the parlors she went to the chambers, where she lingered with gushing tears. There was a crib in one corner, with white quilt and soft pillows over which she bent in deep sorrow. "It was Ella's," she murmured. "Here her dear little head nestled, and her dimpled hand strayed. Here she learned to say Our Father, and here she breathed her life away. Oh, I can't leave this spot."

"Bow down, dear sister, and ask the blessed Jesus to help you. The Great Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering."

Though our Father does not always make the way smooth, he gives the weak feet strength

to tread its roughness, so though the bitterness of parting was not taken away from Mrs. West, she was enable to drink the cup. Afterward she resumed her tour through the rooms. In Felix's chamber her tears flowed again, as she turned from the table to the bureau, from the bed to the book-case by the window. A picture hung over the mantle piece in a simple frame, somewhat tarnished, which a stranger would have passed without a second look. The colors were dull, the scenery tame, the figures spiritless, the execution faulty, yet she detached it from its hook with a trembling hand, and placed it among her choicest treasures. What mother cannot tell why? It was Felix's first attempt at painting, and on this account dearer than the rich gems of art in the rooms below.

Thus she went over her house with scarcely a glance at burnished mirrors, marble tables, and heavy draperies, yet taking a scratched chair, a soiled book, or a worn footstool. Though she left her silver service, which was

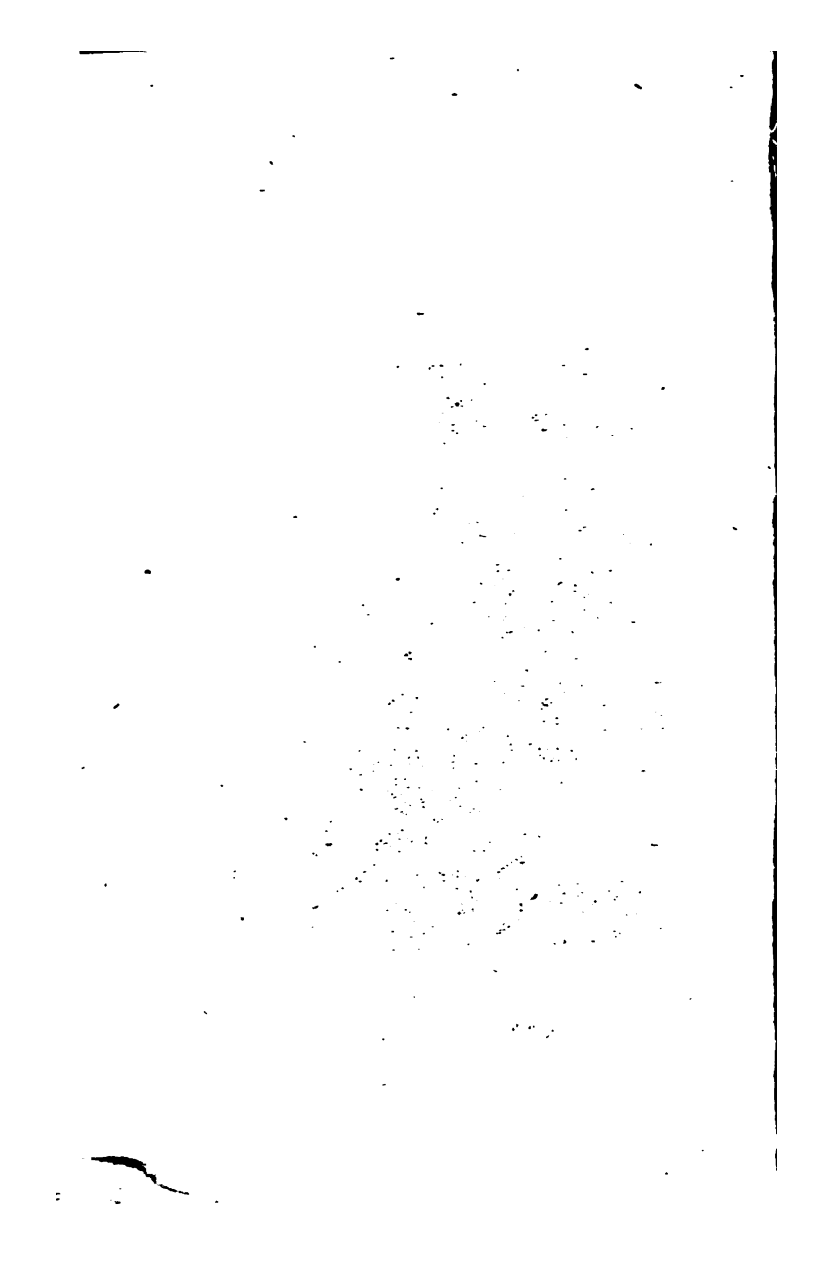


"You are clearing up was his greeting"—p. 201.

and the more brightly and luxuriously watered
on the cloth she gathered up the rags, scraps of
cloth and scraps that were her only resources,
and with them set to be employed in the
little drink and no-pink and no-world little
more was engaged on.

While the mistress of the house was thus
engaged her husband to yield. He went to work
and came to the end of the road. The great
house was empty and deserted, and by
a shadowy man who was carrying a load of
goods to another destination. A shadowy
man in a lower apartment stood Kano, looking
his books, with his fly-die on his back. The
merchants' father-in-law's house was
covered with dust, and the people were lying
on the table, strangely uninterested now.
Two or three torn covers, a pin, a solder, a pen
and rusty, an empty little bottle, a piece of
wire of paper were the entire contents of the
house.

"You are closing up," was a common
saying, and the man looked up.



one of rare beauty and costliness, untouched on the shelf, she gathered up the old-fashioned teapot and spoons that were her mother's bequest, and with them a little cup from which Ella drank, and a napkin ring on which Felix's name was engraven.

While the mistress of the house was thus taking her sad farewells, Dr. West walked once more to the counting-room. The great warehouse was empty and deserted, except by a dray-man who was conveying a bale of goods to another destination. At the desk in an inner apartment stood Kimball, posting his books, with his favorite cat beside him. The merchant's leather-bottomed chair was covered with dust, and his spectacles were laying on the table, strangely unnoticed till now. Two or three torn envelopes, a pen split open and rusty, an empty ink bottle and part of a quire of paper were the entire furnishing of his desk.

"You are clearing up," was his greeting to the book-keeper.

"Yes, sir; the new tenant comes in to-morrow. They are all gone but the old cat and me, and we shall be on our way in another hour." Kimball tried to speak in a careless tone, but the words seemed to stop in his throat. He had grown to love his chair, his desk, the very spot where he wrote, and these things to him constituted nearly the whole of life.

"Where do you go?" inquired the doctor.

"Up to the Green Mountains to see my mother. I haven't been there for two years, and perhaps I shouldn't go for two years more if Mr. West had kept on. There wasn't time, you see," he added, as an apology for his neglect of parental duty. "I mean to stay a spell, and get the old lady's garden made, and take her a little journey maybe."

"After that!" resumed the doctor, with true interest in the worthy book-keeper.

"I'm all provided for," he answered. "Mr. Howard has seen to that; he has found me a place in the same kind of business. If any-

body wants a situation Mr. Howard is the man to go to, and his good word is worth a dozen common recommendations. I know a score of men and boys helped by him in this way, who might have been beating about the streets to this hour."

A heavy step which now approached the door, heralded the approach of Captain Plympton. He was a short, thick-set man, with bushy eye-brows, and a glance that always looked askance at the gazer. "Your brother has got among the breakers," he began, with a side look at Dr. West. "Well, we can't expect to scud before the wind all the time. I'm going up to the house to look at the furniture. I may take a fancy to bid off a carpet or set of chairs."

It was hard to reply civilly to the brute, for surely he had not the heart of a man. Next he turned to Kimball, to whom, after a preface of coarse flattery, he offered the situation of supercargo in his next voyage. Seeing the book-keeper remain silent, he pressed his claim

by a detail of its advantages. His report was certainly very flattering, and if his word could be trusted, there would be little to do beyond the enjoyment of a pleasant voyage, with a fine opportunity to view the country when in port.

"Captain Plympton," replied Kimball, "your story sounds well, and I have but one thing against it. When I was a little boy my mother warned me to keep out of bad company, and I don't think I shall begin now, when I'm most thirty years old."

The answer was sufficient, and the seaman hurried away with some kind of a nautical phrase that was equivalent to a declaration he had been very badly treated.

"That wasn't according to mother," remarked the book-keeper. "Her doctrine was, that we ought to bear with the unthankful and evil, because God does. I don't see how he can. Such scamps as Captain Plympton are enough to make a man want to take the work of vengeance into his own hands." •

"If God dealt with us according to our deserts, who could stand?" inquired the doctor.

“I know it, sir. I think of it often, and when I see such men as you and Mr. Howard, who live according to the Bible, it does me more good than a sermon. It makes me want to do better. I believe I shall yet. My mother has prayed for me ever since I was knee high.”

“Then you are richer than if you had all the property my brother once owned. A mother’s prayers are a rich treasure.”

Kimball took up his cat, stroked her back, and pressed her soft fur to his face, to conceal his emotion. Then he recommenced writing, scratching so badly with his pen, that further conversation was impracticable. Dr. West shook him by the hand, and with one more look at the desk which his brother had occupied for years, silently retired. Near the door he met Mr. Howard.

“I was on my way to seek you,” the latter began. “The creditors have agreed that, in consequence of the unreserved surrender of Mr. West’s whole property to their claims,

they will give his children a thousand dollars, towards their education. It is hard for a man at your brother's time of life to feel that his family is penniless."

Dr. West could express his gratitude only by his face. He knew very well that Mr. Howard must have been the originator of the gift, and afterward he learned, though under the name of the creditors, it was really the joint offering of that gentleman and Mr. Taggart.

"If Mr. West wishes to resume business again," said Mr. Howard, "a few of us who have known him long, are ready to act in the matter, though I would advise him not to re-enter the lists. Men who have had his recent experiences, after they have reached his age, are rarely themselves again; full grown trees, when transplanted, seldom do much except to throw out a few sickly leaves, and struggle through a brief existence."

After a prolonged conversation, during which their hearts opened to each other, in the

confidence of Christian sympathy, Dr. West parted from Mr. Howard. These casual seasons of communion are like fountains by the wayside, soothing and refreshing to the pilgrim. Here he must take up his burden and travel on, with only the memory of the cool waters; hereafter he will roam by the river of life to be satisfied with its eternal blessedness.

Upon Dr. West's return to his brother's house, a dray was at the door, partly loaded with the furniture which was to be taken to the country. "I'll start out of your way, please, sir, if ye'll wait a bit, till I get the big boxes settled," said the Irish teamster. "They'll be canting over, you see, if I touch up the horses now."

Before this work was accomplished, Mr. Taggart drove up with Mr. West, who, with the wilfulness of invalids, determined to have one more look of his dismantled home. Greetings and replies followed, at the carriage door, together with the necessary disincumbering of the invalid, from the shawls and cloaks in which he was enveloped.

Two gentlemen who were walking down the street while this took place, were directly opposite the carriage, when Mr. West's foot touched the step.

"Let him go," said one, "such men are no loss to the community."

"No," returned the other, "I don't help him into business again. I remember how chary he used to be of his favors in old times. He wouldn't wait for me a week, when my daughter died."

"Caleb West's soul might be put into a nutshell, and then leave room for another just like it," was the response of his companion.

The speakers here turned the corner ; accordingly the remainder of the conversation was lost in the distance. The only token Mr. West gave that he heard the remarks, was the flushed face with which he entered the house. It flushed still more when he walked through the partially stripped rooms, and afterward sat down to the table spread in a simple style, without plate or cut-glass. He stirred his tea

without drinking it, gave no answers to the queries of his wife and brother, and pushing away his chair, strode up stairs to brood over his vanished treasures. How could it be otherwise? He had made 'gold his only god, and when that vanished in his grasp, there was no brightness, no joy, no hope in life."

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW LIFE.

“What, my soul, was thy errand, here?
Was it mirth or ease?
Or heaping up dust from year to year?
‘Nay, none of these!’
Speak, soul, aright in His holy sight,
Whose eye looks still
And steadily on thee through the night,
‘To do His will.’”

WHEN the old homestead received Caleb West into its shelter, it received a disappointed man, whose heart was embittered against the whole world. His wife pointed to the green fields that stretched out on either hand till they swelled into a mountain on one side, and were skirted by a forest on the other. Alas! to him those verdant walls were but little better than a living grave. With a deep sigh he flung himself into an easy chair, where

he bewailed the evils of his lot. The room certainly was not attractive, with its low ceiling, antiquated windows, deep fire-place, and prim mantle-piece. His eye rested with a dissatisfied look upon all, and remained fixed longest on a spot in the opposite wall paper, discolored by damp.

"A picture will cover it," said the doctor, whose eye turned in the same direction. "I have learned that if we cannot always remove the unpleasant things of life, we can do nearly as well, keep them out of sight."

"The great fire-place, the heavy window-sashes, the ugly niches in the wall, the broken down garden fence, and my broken fortunes; you would keep all these out of sight, too," inquired the merchant, in a vexed tone.

"Yes," was the reply, "I would look at them only as incentives to action. The house contrasts painfully with your city-home, but you can render it habitable and even pleasant, by a little labor. So with your broken fortunes,—though you may never recover your

lost wealth, you can gain a subsistence from the culture of these acres, and ere long your children will be able to do something for themselves."

Mr. West groaned, "I am no better off now than I was twenty-five years ago, and I am so much older."

"Brother," replied the doctor, seriously, "I have known people to thank God for the teachings of adversity, and I believe it will be so with you."

"Never," murmured Caleb West, with a despairing look, "never. It is no use for me to live, and I might as well die."

So he curled himself up in the easy-chair, to brood over his misfortunes, while his wife and brother applied themselves resolutely to labor. Under their busy hands muslin curtains soon veiled the harsh outlines of the windows, the sofa filled one of the large niches, and a book-case the other, and the cavernous fire-place became a miniature flower-garden, bright with starry tufts of bloom. As a perfecting touch

to the arrangements, May and Lucia placed a few choice books on the table, beside a dish of pansies and early violets, and then opened the shutters to admit the sunshine. No sunshine beamed upon Mr. West's heart, nor did the sound of hammer and nails, or the echo of active feet that hurried up and down stairs with various burdens, rouse him from his morbid fancies.

"It is no use for me to live," he sighed again and again. It might have been, if, instead of wasting his energies in idle murmurs for the past, he had taken up with willing hands the duties of the present. So it was through the entire summer. With folded arms and a moody brow, he paced up and down the avenue that led from the house to the highway, often pausing to portray the improvements he might have made with his former fortune, yet never beginning to do what good health and a strong arm still placed in his power.

The garden gate was broken. You can

make a new rustic one like mine, that you admired so much the other day," said the doctor. "I picked up the materials in the woods ; a knot here, and a bent twig there, and put it together in my hours of leisure. That is the way I made my garden chair and trellises. Jump into my carriage, I am going by the same woods now."

The invitation was accepted, and bark and boughs gathered, but here the gate came to a stand still. With a cowardly shrinking from the use of the handsaw, the dispirited man resumed his former aimless walks down the path, or still more aimless reveries in the rocking-chair. Even when his brother came to his assistance, he looked on with careless indifference, the only thing he did being to select a curved branch for the arch at the top.

In the Spring, Mrs. West, earnest to make the most of her resources, had every nook and corner of the garden planted with vegetables, which, for some weeks, thrived with much luxuriance. The weeds also flourished, much

to the dismay of poor George, who had been installed as gardener. Wholly unacquainted with labor, the lad toiled early and late, often with blistered hand and throbbing temples, and yet found the weeds ever in advance. His father leaning against the garden fence, in the shade of the Bartlett pear-tree, wondered that the lad did not accomplish more, but he never offered to take the hoe himself.

He was standing thus when Dr. West fastened his horse to one of the posts. "Rather warm, is n't it, George, working in the hot sun?" was his greeting. "Let me take the hoe a minute, while you bring me a glass of cold water from the pump."

The lad never needed a second bidding from his uncle, nor would he now, even if the commission had not been merely a pretext to give him a moment to rest.

"One thing more," resumed the doctor; "I did not call at the post-office this morning. You may ride round there if you like, while I stay here with your father."

Away went George with the horse, pleased with a ride to the village, and when he came back, invigorated in body and mind, he found that the water-melon bed which he had been dreading for a week, was wholly free from weeds.

"It is too hard for him, brother," Dr. West said, while George was absent. "He looks thin already, and delicately reared plants like him wither in the first exposure."

"We can't afford to hire," replied the merchant, coldly, "and we must have vegetables."

"Then take the hoe yourself; the exercise will do you good, but don't stand there complaining of hard fortune while a weak boy does the work that properly belongs to you."

The tone and language were more vehement than the speaker was accustomed to use, and Caleb West looked up in surprise to see what had come over his patient-spirited brother. "You have lost one boy," was resumed, "take care of the other. George is burdened beyond his strength or years."

The next morning, Mr. West went into the garden with the determination to uproot the tallest weeds, but as he pulled up his son's cherished tomatoes and broke down a white lily which was heavy with a weight of buds, George wished he would persist in his old habit of leaning against the fence. With this misdirected effort at gardening Mr. West's labor for a time ended.

When one chastisement does not bring back the wanderer to the path of duty, our Father often sends another. With the bright hours of Autumn, sickness came to the homestead. Mrs. West, worn out by her summer of toil and care, was taken down with fever, and the next week George, perhaps, for want of his mother's sympathy, lay down to rest an hour, but before the hour expired, he was wild with delirium. The delirious often rave of bright skies and cool waters, or sing snatches of pleasant songs, or listen to the lullabies of infancy, but poor George, true to the want that had oppressed him through the season, only

called for rest. Work, care, digging, weeding, were the images that flitted round his pillow.

"Let me go," he exclaimed, suddenly starting from the bed; "the potatoes must be dug. I must gather the apples," he soon added. "Oh, how I dread it. I can't now," and he fell back exhausted. "I'm too tired," and his voice sank into a weary moan. "Don't tell mother my head aches," he pleaded; "she would make me lie down, and I can't spare time. Oh, why don't father help me."

Mr. West heard these revelations while at the bed-side of his child; sometimes they must have gone to his heart, so touchingly did the unconscious boy detail his early acquaintance with care and labor. After a scene of this kind, Mr. West went to the adjoining room where his wife lay, not delirious like George, but weak as an infant in her prostration. She looked up with the patient smile her face had lately worn, a reflection caught, though he knew it not, from the light that beamed on her

path from Heaven. He smiled back in return, lingering a moment by the bed, and then walked into the garden. Golden corn was ripening on the stalk, fruit maturing on the bough, grapes purpling in heavy clusters on the vine. With a transient glance at these, Mr. West passed to the potato patch beyond. A portion of the harvest had been gathered, next came a score of hills with potatoes uncovered to the sun, near by was a hoe thrown down as when last used, and beyond a basket half-filled with large tubers, and a wheelbarrow on which was another basket heaped to the brim. A jacket lay on the handles of the barrow, a worn, soiled jacket with dust on the sleeves and fruit-stains down the front. As Mr. West took up the garment he recollected George had worn it at his work, and with that memory came another of the tired boy toiling through the hot summer days.

Do any tell you that some hearts harden into stone? If it be so there are times when the rock will be rent, and living waters gush

forth. Mr. West sat down among the potato hills, and with his face bowed upon his bosom, heaved great sobs, so that his frame shook with agony. His brother who came out to seek him, went away unseen, for he knew the hand of God was on him.

During that hour of bitter remorse, the worldly man saw his whole life spread out in one vast panorama. Selfishness, selfishness, utter selfishness, was written on every scene, glared from every deed, encountered him at every turning. A wasted life, perverted time, misapplied riches, buried talents, neglected duties, unrequited loves, rose like mocking forms to taunt him with their presence. The rock in the wilderness, when riven, poured out a ceaseless flow ; so the sternest natures, when moved, thrill to the inner depths of their being. Mr. West sat on the ground until, with a great effort, he rose and commenced gathering the uncovered potatoes. When the basket was full, he placed it beside the other in the barrow, and taking the handles with a firm grasp, started for the house.

After he had deposited the tubers in the bin, he went up stairs to his wife's chamber. The invalid was alone, the nurse having gone to George, who needed her more. Mrs. West's pillow looked hard, her mouth was parched and her hands strayed over the sheet. Moved by a sudden impulse, Mr. West dipped a napkin and attempted to bathe her forehead. Unaccustomed to the service, he dripped the liquid into her face and eyes, and partly flooded the counterpane ; but the sick woman knew it not, nor would she, if the drops had been a deluge. She smiled gratefully at the attention, and her smile was so like the radiant expression her face had worn in girlhood, that her husband bent over her and kissed her pale lips. It had been years since he had done such a thing as that — years of patient devotion on her part, and selfish worldliness on his. Neither of them spoke, but he lingered beside her, smoothing the disordered tresses that floated over the pillow and gazing into her face with a portion of his former tenderness.

"She will be better shortly," said the doctor, who found the pair thus. You can do her more good, Caleb, by one little kindness, than I with a trunk full of medicine. A great many women go through life starving for their husbands' sympathy, until, worn out by the vain yearning, they sink into the grave."

From this time forth, a new life seemed transfused into Mr. West. That hour of mental conflict in the potato field, which had taken the scales from his eyes, opened his spiritual vision to a more just appreciation of the duties and responsibilities of existence. He saw, what we all shall see, when we have a true discernment, that he who merely seeks to garner up gold, or who passes along intent on selfish purposes alone, is like the blasted tree, which casts no shade, unfolds no blossoms and matures no fruit.

The first thought of George, when he recovered his consciousness, was of his ungathered harvest. "I must get along quick and dig the potatoes," he murmured, when scarcely able to sit up in bed.

“The potatoes are all in the cellar, my son,” replied the father.

“Who did it?” was the next inquiry.

“Your father, with two days’ help from Michael Learey.”

“I am glad,” murmured the sick boy, as he turned over and went to sleep.

Some days after this, Dr. West and his brother walked in the village cemetery. It was in the delightful season of Indian summer—a fit time to muse in the place of graves, so much of brightness lingers with the dying year. A golden haze, like a veil of glory, hung over the forest and mountain, and gilded the evergreens that were scattered among the tomb-stones. The brothers walked on with an occasional pause at some marble shaft or moss grown slab, until they reached the spot where Felix and Ella lay side by side.

“Brother,” said the merchant, deeply affected, “God requireth that which is past! I never did my duty to these sleepers, never did it to any one, and how shall I atone? My whole life

is one barren waste, without a single spot which gives me pleasure in the retrospect."

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," was the inscription on a stone not far from the speaker. To this his brother pointed as a more fitting answer than aught he could give.

"Edward," the merchant spoke again, "I have spent the noonday of my life in the feverish pursuit of riches ; for that I sacrificed rest, comfort, domestic happiness, the claims of others, and, I am almost afraid, the hopes of heaven. In all that time I never gave away ten dollars in charity. I thought I had no time for such things. I was mistaken ; I had the time, but I used it all for self."

While he was speaking, Dr. Haley rode by in the carriage which was the gift of his people. "The sight of that carriage, has kept me uneasy all summer," said Mr. West. I knew I ought to give Dr. Haley one when you first mentioned it. It would not have begun to pay him for the interest he took in me when I was

a boy, but I was too selfish. I put it off, as I did all the other duties, till a time when they would not interfere with my own plans."

"Caleb," replied the doctor, "I believe Mr. Taggart's theory was the true one, when he said he tried to finish the work of every day, so that if it were to be the last, he could go to his rest, leaving behind no unperformed duties."

"Do you recollect those two gentlemen on the sidewalk, the day before I left the city, who said I could be spared as well as not? They were right, though I was indignant at the charge then." After a pause Mr. West resumed, "Poor Felix! he told me on his death-bed that if he had had a better father, he should have been a better son. He said I might have saved him from ruin, if I had not cared more for money than I did for him. It was true, every word of it. What shall I do, Edward; how escape from this terrible burden?" and the conscience-stricken man groaned aloud in his remorse.

Here the conversation was interrupted by a

gentleman who approached the brothers. It was Mr. Howard, from the city, led by the sympathy which was a part of his nature, when he heard of the sickness in Mr. West's family, to visit his old neighbor in his affliction.

"My wife and son are both better," Mr. West replied to the greeting. "My wife had a ride to-day, which she thinks gave her new strength; and when George walked into the garden at noon, he wished there were some potatoes to be dug."

"And yourself," pursued Mr. Howard, with a glance at the anxious face.

"Well in body, though not in mind. I am just beginning to see what a mistaken life I have lived all these years."

"Then there is hope of you," rejoined Mr. Howard. "A man never sends for a physician till he feels himself in need. Jesus Christ is the only physician who can help you, and he can effect a perfect cure."

The work of an entire day cannot be done after the sun passes the meridian, neither could Mr.

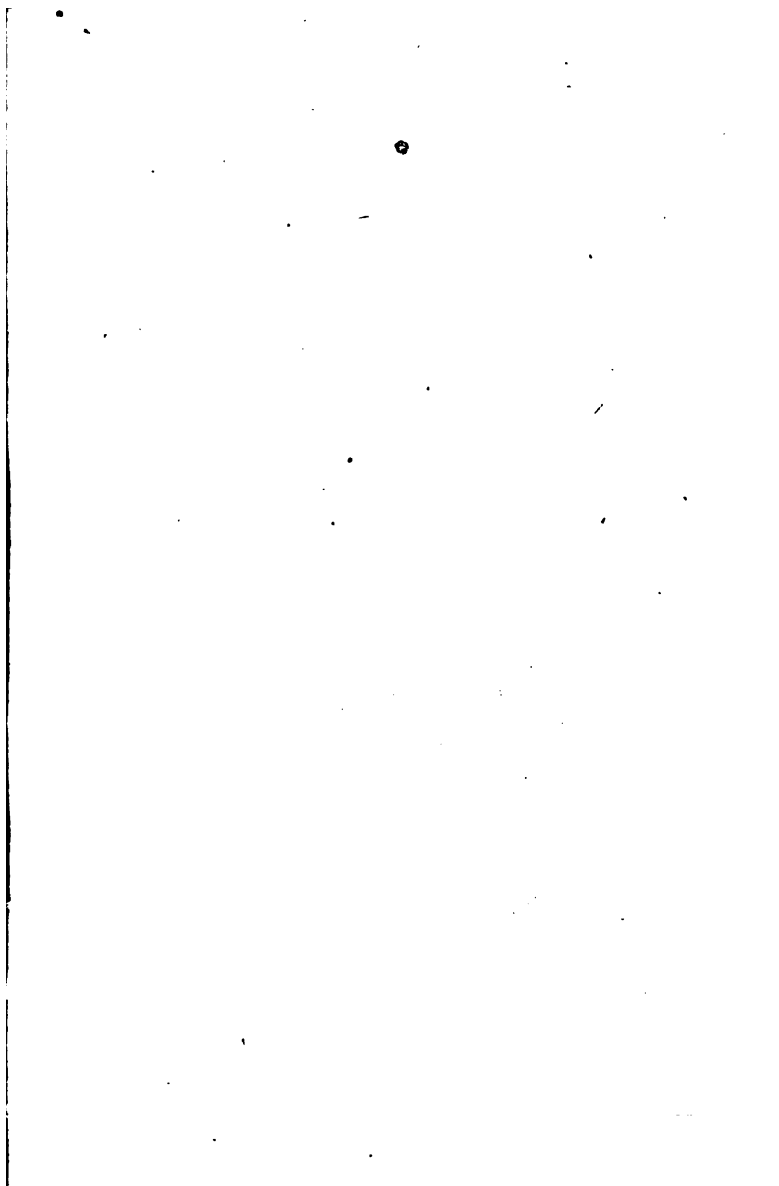
West crowd into his declining years the duties that belonged to a whole life time. He had much with which to contend in uprooting old habits of thought and action, so interwoven were worldliness and selfishness with his very being. He never ripened into symmetrical manhood, with tastes, principles, affections and sympathies, developed into a harmonious form of Christian excellence. This could not be expected, but after months of doubt and struggling, he became an humble Christian, conscious of his deficiencies, penitent for the past, and trusting for acceptance with a holy God, only in the perfect atonement of a crucified Redeemer. The patient smile on Mrs. West's face changed into a more hopeful expression with the increased blessings of her later years. Riches never came to the old homestead, but industry and frugality, with a sum always in reserve for the calls of benevolence. George, a conscientious, intelligent young man is in the service of Mr. Howard, who is still engaged in business, though he has transferred the more

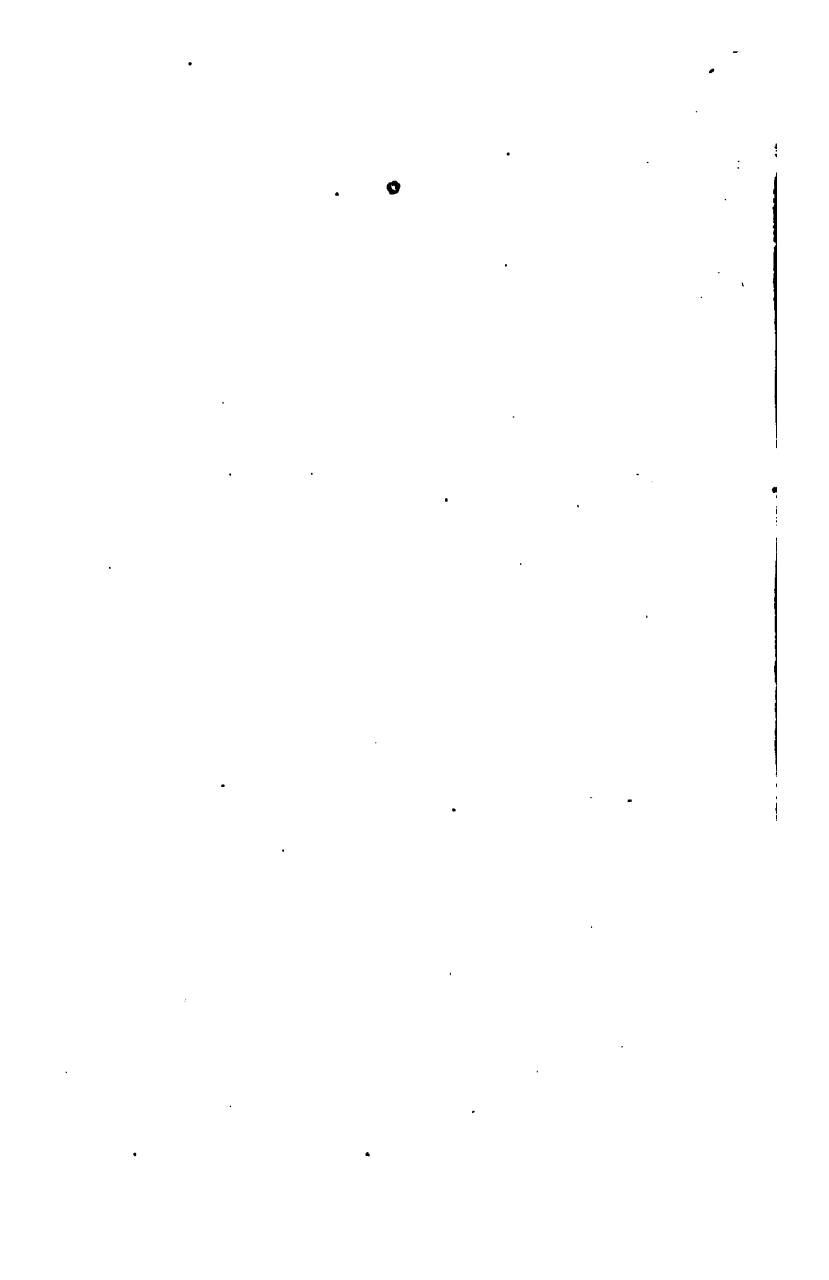
active duties to his son. Dr. West is older now, with a stoop in his shoulders and a bare spot on his head, yet with the same light in his eye and warmth in his heart. Such men never grow really old, for the fountain of youth flows in their veins.

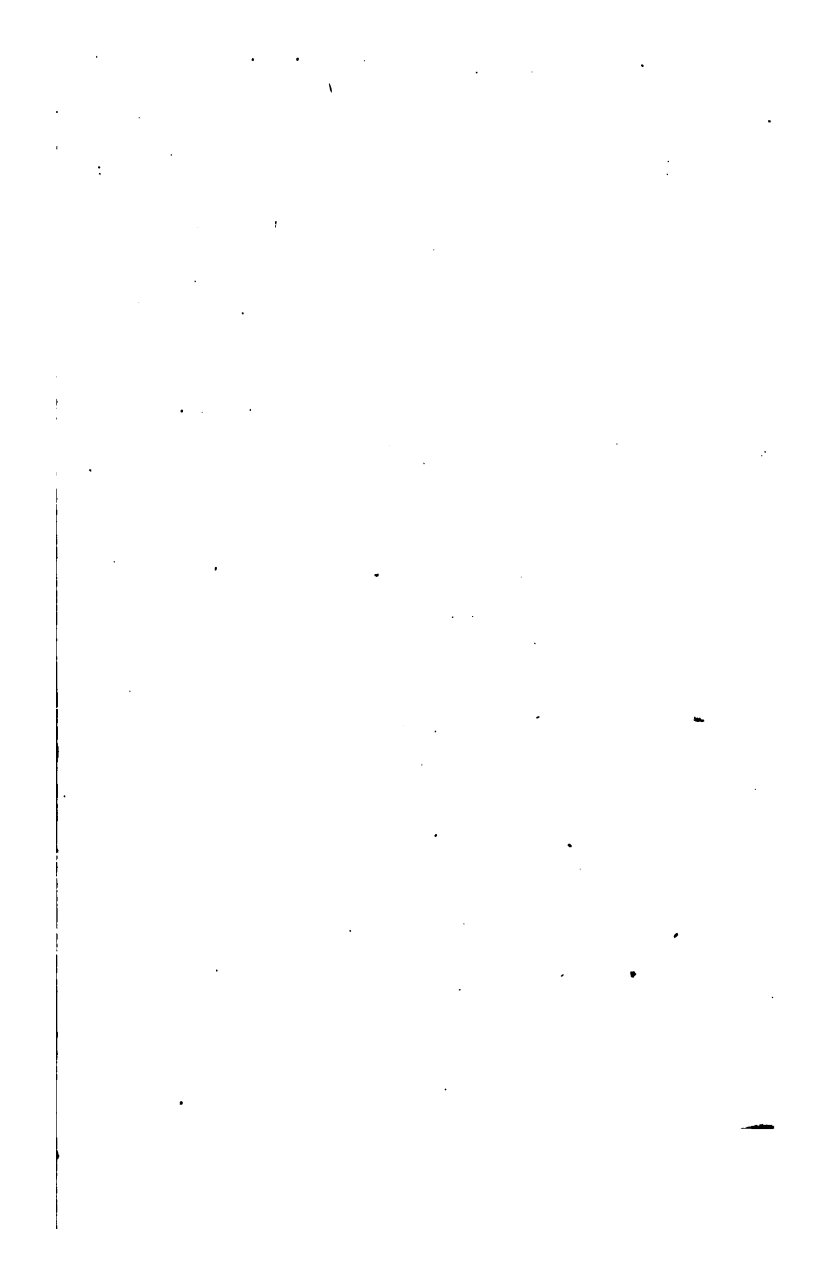
In the little enclosure, with its hedge of evergreen, which we visited long ago in the summer sunset at Cheshire, is another mound by the side of those where we then wept. "He walked with God and was not, for God took him." Oh, my reader, we do not need the inscription engraved on the marble to tell us that the mortal part of Mr. Taggart here awaits its resurrection.

Frank and Mary, are now man and woman, the latter the wife of Dr. Hooker, who shares with our doctor the village practice; the former, in the flush of manhood, with noble purposes, cultivated intellect, and unwonted graces, ministers in the pulpit where good Dr. Haley left a track of living light.

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